





**UBSPD**

UBS Publishers' Distributors Ltd.

5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002 (India)

Cable: ALL BOOKS

Fax : 91-11-3276593

Phone: 3273601-64 Telex: 31-65106



**JUL 02 1991**





**CASTE, POLITICS AND THE RAJ**

**UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, MONOGRAPH**

1. **Internal Migration in India: A case study of Bengal by Haraprasad Chattopadhyay.**
2. **Political Activity of the Liberal Party in India: 1919-1937 by Hasi Banerjee.**
3. **The Tribal Protest Movements in Eastern India: 1760-1922—Origins, Ideology and Organization by Binoy Bhushan Chaudhury (In Press)**
4. **The Agrarian Economy of Tamilnadu: 1820-55 by Arun Bandopadhyay (In Press)**
5. **Caste, Politics and the Raj: Bengal 1872-1937 by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay**



Department of History, University of Calcutta, Monograph 5

# Caste, Politics and the Raj

## Bengal 1872-1937

**SEKHAR BANDYOPADHYAY** 

**K P Bagchi & Company**

Calcutta

New Delhi

DS  
422  
C3  
B34311  
1990

*First Published 1990*

K P BAGCHI & COMPANY

286 B.B. Ganguli Street, Calcutta-700 012

I-1698 Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi-110 019

© Department of History, University of Calcutta

ISBN : 81-7074-066-5

The Publication has been subsidised by University of Calcutta

Published by : K K Bagchi  
for K P Bagchi & Company  
286 B.B. Ganguli Street, Calcutta-700 012

Composed at : SHAGUN COMPOSERS  
92-B, Street No. 4, Krishna Nagar,  
Safdarjung Enclave,  
New Delhi-29

Printed at : NAV PRABHAT PRINTING PRESS  
1/5057, Gali No. 2, Balbir Nagar,  
Shahdara, Delhi-110032



CL  
PL 480-SH  
6-10-92

*To  
The Memory of  
Shri Arun Kanti Banerjee*





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been working on the present project for a fairly long time—indeed for more than a decade now. In these long years of agony and ecstasy, often intercepted by periods of despair and complete inaction, I have shared my views with many scholars, some renowned, others waiting for fame. My debts, therefore, are to many people and I wish to take this opportunity to thank them all. My first and foremost debt is to my research supervisor Amales Tripathi. I am grateful also to Rajat Kanta Ray for his valuable advice at different stages of my research, particularly at the final stage when I was writing my thesis. In converting that thesis into a book, I benefited immensely from the suggestions and comments of Barun De. With late Hitesranjan Sanyal I discussed at length various aspects of my work and always received from him not only academic advice but also inspiration and encouragement. It is a matter of lasting personal grief that he has not lived to see the publication of this book. I have also benefited from discussions with Soumyen Mukherjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gautam Bhadra. To my friends, Basudeb Chattopadhyay, Hari Vasudevan, Arun Bandopadhyay, Rudrangsu Mukherjee, Parimal Ghosh, Bhaskar Chakraborty and Suranjan Das, I have talked incessantly and this in my opinion has been most helpful in forming and clarifying many of my ideas that have gone into the book. I am particularly thankful to Debabrata Mukherjee of the Department of English, Jadavpur University, who went through the entire manuscript and corrected many of the linguistic errors.

I have enjoyed working in many libraries and archives, both in Calcutta and in New Delhi. These include Calcutta University Library, the National Library, the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Library, the West Bengal Secretariat Library, the West Bengal State Archives and the National Archives of India. I wish to express my gratitude to the staff of all these institutions for their kind help and co-operation. To the Indian Council of Historical Research I am thankful for the financial assistance that helped me to meet parts of my research expenses. The first two chapters of this book were published earlier in the *Bengal Past and Present* and *The Calcutta Historical Journal* respectively and

I am thankful to the editors of the two journals for allowing me to reproduce them here again. My sincere thanks go also to the Department of History, Calcutta University for sponsoring and to Messers K P Bagchi & Company for undertaking the publication of this book.

To my family I am indebted in many ways. To my parents, Pratima and Nani Gopal Bandyopadhyay, I owe my initial interest in academic research. It was my wife Srilekha who motivated a lethargic researcher into action. My little daughter Sohini has been a constant source of pleasant and refreshing distraction that helped me to bear with the tedium of research. My father-in-law, Arun Kanti Banerjee was always a source of inspiration for me, as in him I could find a man of reason with an insatiable hunger for knowledge. I fervently looked forward to presenting him a copy of my book on the first day of its publication. But his sudden death has deprived me of that privilege. To his cherished memory I dedicate this book as my humble tribute to his magnetic personality.

The errors that still remain in this book must be too many and I alone stand responsible for them.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay

11 January 1990  
Centre for South & Southeast Asian Studies  
Calcutta University

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>A.D.P.I.</b>	<b>Assistant Director of Public Instruction</b>
<b>BLCP</b>	<b>Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings</b>
<b>Commssr.</b>	<b>Commissioner</b>
<b>D.P.I.</b>	<b>Director of Public Instruction</b>
<b>Dy. Secy.</b>	<b>Deputy Secretary</b>
<b>EB &amp; A</b>	<b>East Bengal and Assam</b>
<b>GB</b>	<b>Government of Bengal</b>
<b>GI</b>	<b>Government of India</b>
<b>Hony. Secy.</b>	<b>Honorary Secretary</b>
<b>Jt. Secy.</b>	<b>Joint Secretary</b>
<b>Offcg.</b>	<b>Officiating</b>
<b>Secy.</b>	<b>Secretary</b>





## **CONTENTS**

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Caste in Colonial Sociology</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2. Caste and Protective Discrimination</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>3. Caste and Social Mobility</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>4. Caste Associations and 'Depressed Classes' Politics</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>225</b>



# Introduction

## I

For any historical analysis of Indian social evolution, it is difficult to ignore the pervasive influence of caste ethics on the social milieu. Dissidences did occur from time to time. But these dissident groups were also gradually accommodated and assimilated within the same social structure. This caste system codified the norms of social behaviour for the Hindus and also provided them with a social organisation. Although urban influence or education sometimes led to the slackening of the bonds of caste, the peasantry or the less educated urban folk were more firmly in its grips. The organisational framework provided by caste, therefore, had a profound impact on any social or political movement involving the masses. There is scope for debate on whether this impact was negative or positive.<sup>1</sup> But it is hardly possible to deny its existence or importance. It is also difficult to ignore its significance while analysing the history of our struggle for freedom.

On the history of the nationalist movement in Bengal, we have by now a rich literature.<sup>2</sup> By way of relating the political movements to the social structure, all these works have pointed out that the nationalist politics was almost an exclusive preserve of high caste Hindus and that the lower castes, as well as the Muslims, preferred to stay away from it. The situation began to change in the Gandhian period, but not to any great extent. From these works we have come to know why or how the lower castes were left behind. But we do not as yet fully know why they themselves did not come forward on their own and join the anti-colonial struggle, or what is more important, why some of them opposed it on a number of occasions. There is certainly no reason to believe that they stood just as passive onlookers, watching disinterestedly what was happening in society, economy or pol-

itics during colonial period. On the contrary, as some recent studies have shown for the other parts of the country,<sup>3</sup> they were active participants in this historical process. But their response differed from that of the nationalists, many of whom belonged to the higher castes. This was due to a difference in the perception of the reality that generated such responses. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the problem from below. We cannot have a composite picture of this political process, unless we explore the consciousness of these lower caste people in their own terms or analyse their grievances, aspirations and ideas that shaped their attitude to the colonial rule vis-a-vis the nationalist movement.

This analysis must also involve a discussion on the structure of the society, as this estrangement seems to have originated, to a large extent, from the caste-based stratification system of the traditional society and the changes that occurred in that social structure during colonial period. But social history of modern Bengal is still a relatively neglected area of historical research and the existing works in this field do not help us in understanding this complex sociopolitical process. We have, of course, some important works on reform movements or on the activities of the individual social reformers. But these writings contain little information on caste system, which was never the central focus of any reforming endeavour in this province.<sup>4</sup> The earlier works on caste system in Bengal<sup>5</sup> are mainly descriptive and hence more useful as sources of information rather than authentic analyses of caste society. The modern writings on the subjects,<sup>6</sup> though there are not many, provide us with some valuable insights. But they do not help us in comprehending how the differential impact of colonial rule reinforced the built-in contradictions of the social structure and thus led to further estrangement between the 'higher' and the 'lower' strata in the caste hierarchy. Nor do they show how such dissimilar impacts created different perceptions about the nature of colonial rule and accordingly evoked different responses to it. More precisely, these studies do not adequately explain why certain 'lower' sections of the Bengali Hindu society developed a distinct social and political identity of their own, how they evolved a separatist caste ideology and consequently moved away from the political mainstream.<sup>7</sup>

It is to fill in these gaps in our historical knowledge about society and politics in Bengal, that the present study proposes to examine some organised lower caste movements during this crucial period of her history. It seeks to show how, in the late nineteenth and the early twen

tieth centuries, changes in the opportunity structure had led to limited vertical social mobility among the members of these lower castes. This phenomenon, it is argued, changed their social behaviour by generating on the one hand further ambitions and creating on the other a spirit of defiance to the social authority of the higher castes. This led to the organisation of caste associations that worked for the social upliftment of their respective communities. Through these bodies sometimes, the aspirations of the lower caste 'elites' converged with the grievances of their 'masses' and this conjunction rested on a skilful manipulation of the common caste identity. Wherever such a convergence occurred, a powerful caste movement was born. But, as the study would show, this did not happen always. Furthermore, the study would also explore why the ambitions and grievances of such groups could not be accommodated within the framework of the nationalist movement, which had come to be associated with the privileged higher castes. This schism was further fanned and taken advantage of by the colonial government, in order to encourage the development of a separate lower caste politics which would both weaken the nationalist struggle and provide legitimacy to the Raj in Bengal, in the same way as Muslim separatism. The study is primarily based on archival materials, many of which had escaped the notice of the earlier historians. It also uses caste literature which reveals the mental world of these organised lower castes, or at least of their articulate sections, who were both protesting against the disabilities of caste system and trying to come out of the backwaters of the institutional politics to take advantage of the new world.

## II

In order to understand this complex process of social transformation during colonial period, one should, however, have a brief look at the pre-colonial traditional society. In Bengal, as in other parts of India, caste system in a significant way determined the patterns of social relationship among the Hindus, as the modes of interaction between two individuals depended on their respective caste status. The system in medieval Bengal provided for a social organisation which in fact had many dimensions. It had, first of all, a functional significance, as the *Mangalakavyas* refer to castes primarily as occupational *jatis*.<sup>8</sup> It implies the existence of a social division of labour, with hereditary occupation and regulated distribution of the surplus for each caste.

No one was permitted, under religious sanctions, to change the hereditary occupation and adopt that of others. The system in this way eliminated competition with a guarantee of minimum subsistence for all, as long as they pursued their own calling.<sup>9</sup> But the caste system was not purely and simply a professional system—"caste and profession were linked through the intermediary of religion".<sup>10</sup> Such religious notions led to the division of occupations into clean and unclean (or pure and impure) and different castes in terms of their occupations varied accordingly in ritual rank. Each rank carried with it a set of prerogatives or disabilities,<sup>11</sup> as it determined for each caste the degree of access to the Vedas or Vedic religious rites. This also indicates that caste was essentially a normative system which prescribed for each social unit, according to its ritual rank, a "code for conduct" or *jati-dharma*,<sup>12</sup> which had to be performed in real life through actual conduct or *vyavahara*. The non-observance of these beliefs or *acharas* led to the fall from the ascribed rank and being regarded as *patita* or fallen. But this fall might not have been for perpetuity, as in the case of an involuntary violation, one could be reinstated in his former caste position through penance or *prayaschitta*.<sup>13</sup>

However, the caste system had important structural implications too. Although usually, an occupational *jati* was the most characteristic social unit in medieval Bengal, such occupational groups were also sometimes divided into a number of endogamous sub-castes, known by different names, such as *sreni*, *samaj*, *ashram* or *thak*. The lines of demarcation were sometimes marked out by professional specialization, sometimes by cultural differentiation and sometimes by geographical location.<sup>14</sup> These social units may broadly be defined as 'status groups',<sup>15</sup> or aggregates of individuals who shared a particular set of norms of social and ritual behaviour and a consciousness of community-identity and to which membership depended on birth. These groups, as the terms 'status' or 'stratum' imply, were related to each other as higher or lower. All those factors mentioned above, like birth, occupation, territorial location, differential access to Vedic religion and the nature of the *jati-dharma*, as well as its observance and non-observance, determined the amount of purity a caste embodied and the pollution it was likely to transmit, primarily through water.<sup>16</sup> The various occupational *jatis*, along with their sub-castes, were ordered, according to this purity-pollution scale, into an elaborate hierarchy, encompassing the entire Hindu society. It contained, according to the thirteenth-fourteenth century *Puranas*, four classi-

fied groups.<sup>17</sup> In course of the next four centuries, there had been further differentiation, leading to the emergence of six well-demarcated categories to which all the Bengali castes were neatly fitted in. Their respective ranks depended upon the degree of pollution transmitted through water touched by them, as well as by the behaviour of the Brahmans, as far as their services in the Vedic religious rites were required.

In Bengal, historically, only two classical *varnas* could be found, the Brahmans and the Sudras.<sup>18</sup> In course of a few centuries, the Brahman *varna* became intricately fragmented into several castes or to use more appropriately Irawati Karve's terminology, came to constitute a 'caste-cluster'.<sup>19</sup> The original seven hundred Brahman families of Bengal were referred to as the 'Satsati' Brahmans.<sup>20</sup> Later on according to their geographical location, they came to be divided into Rarhis (living on the west bank of Bhagirathi) and Barendra (settled in northern Bengal). The Rarhis, in course of time, came to be further sub-divided into several endogamous units, such as Kulin, Bangsaja, Suddha Srotiya and Kashtha Srotiya.<sup>21</sup> Then, according to one set of *Kuloji* legends, in about 1001 Saka Era or 1079 A.D., five Brahmans, proficient in Vedic rituals, were brought to Bengal from Kanauj. Another set of legends also refer to Islamic invasion causing large scale emigration of Brahmans from the basin of the river Saraswati and their subsequent settlement in Bengal. These Brahmans coming from northern India eventually came to be known as the Paschatya Vaidiks, while another branch of immigrants, coming from Orissa and the Dravida country in the South, were called the Dakshinatya Vaidiks. It was these *sat* or pure Brahmans who constituted the first category or the highest stratum in the regional caste hierarchy of Bengal. But apart from them, there were also the two other immigrant groups, the Sakadwipis and the Saraswats, with uncertain social status, and also the whole range of *patita* or fallen Brahmans of lesser ritual status, such as the Grahbipras (astrologers), the Agradanis (who accepted offerings in funeral ceremonies), the Bhats (bards), and the *Varna* or *Byasokta* Brahmans (who officiated in the ritual ceremonies of the lower castes).<sup>22</sup> Among the latter, those who officiated for the Kaibarttas and had settled down in the Midnapur region were known as Madhyamsroni.<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of the colonial rule, this fragmentation was well demarcated among the Brahmans of Bengal.<sup>24</sup>

Below the Brahmans, the Sudras were divided into a number of occupational *jatis*, which were also regarded as *varna-sankara jatis*,

i.e., resulting from miscegenation among men and women of the different *varnas*. In terms of their purity they were broadly classified into two groups: *Satsudra* or pure or clean Sudras and *Asatsudra* or polluted or unclean Sudras.<sup>25</sup> Among the *Satsudra jatis*, the Baidyas and the Kayasthas were represented in the thirteenth century texts as the *Uttamasankara*, i.e., the best or the highest stratum of the *sankara jatis* or the mixed castes. They were considered as *jalacharaniya*, because water (*jal*) served by them was acceptable (*acharaniya*) to the Brahmans and they were also entitled to the services of the pure Brahmans in their religious ceremonies. They were not, however, permitted to offer cooked food to either the deities or to the Brahmans. In popular estimation the Baidyas and the Kayasthas were often lumped together with the Brahmans, in spite of the difference in ritual rank, to form the higher caste group, known as the *Uchchajati* of Bengal. In terms of ritual rank, the group of castes known as the *Nabasakh* (or the nine branches) enjoyed the same status as the Baidyas and the Kayasthas. They were also considered as *Satsudra* and *jalacharaniya* and were entitled to the services of the good Brahmans. But in social position, arising possibly out of secular status, they stood one step behind the Baidyas and the Kayasthas and thereby occupied the third stratum in the local caste hierarchy of Bengal. This group, initially consisting in nine (*naba*) castes, eventually came to include fourteen, viz., Gandhabanik, Sankhabanik, Kansabanik, Tambulibanik, Gop (or Sadgop), Tantubay, Modak, Napit, Tili, Malakar, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, Barui and Madhunapit.<sup>26</sup>

Below the *Nabasakh* castes and above the other *Asatsudra jatis*, stood an intermediary group of castes, who were considered as *jalacharaniya*, but were not served by the clean Brahmans. Historically, the most important caste in this group was the Kaibartta, the agricultural section of which later on claimed to be the Mahishyas.<sup>27</sup> The *Asatsudra jatis* were divided into two groups. The first group was called *ajalchal*, i.e., water touched by them was not acceptable and, therefore, *jalavyavahariya*, or whose water could not be used either by the Brahmans or the *Satsudras*. A Brahman would pollute himself and would lose his caste by offering his services to them in their religious ceremonies. The village barber would shave them but would not pare their toe-nails or perform his ritual duties during their marriage ceremonies. To this group belonged a number of castes, the most important of them being the Sahas, the Subarnabaniks<sup>28</sup> and the Jogis. The other group of *Asatsudra jatis* who constituted the bottommost layer



in the regional caste hierarchy of Bengal, consisted of the *Antyaja* or low-born castes. They were the untouchables, that is to say, they transmitted pollution not merely through water, but even through their touch. They were only served by the *Varna* Brahmans. They usually received the services of the village washerman, but were rarely shaved by the barber. This sixth or the lowest stratum of the local caste hierarchy also incorporated numerous castes, such as the Chandals, Pods, Dhobas, Bhumalis etc.<sup>29</sup>

However, more often in reality, material prosperity, political power and higher ritual rank went together.<sup>30</sup> As Niharranjan Ray observed, the linkages between caste and class were being established in Bengal as early as the Gupta period. As a settled agricultural economy developed, groups involved in social production, providing physical labour or doing the menial jobs began to lose in ritual status vis-a-vis the intelligentsia: the priests, clerks and the physicians.<sup>31</sup> The caste system prevented the lower castes from owning land. As a result, they constituted in pre-British India "a large rural proletariat" who, besides following their prescribed menial professions, were only supposed to work on the fields of the *zamindars* and the land-holding peasants, belonging to the higher or the middle orders of the caste hierarchy.<sup>32</sup> It will not, therefore, be an exaggeration to say that the doctrine of caste was to legitimise a system of surplus absorption, which prescribed fixed roles for everybody, but provided minimum social security for all.<sup>33</sup>

This leads us to the political aspect of caste which was, as Ronald Inden noted, a component element of the medieval Hindu power structure in Bengal.<sup>34</sup> With minimum interference from the central authority, the territorial chiefs or the Rajas, and below them the *zamindars*, controlled the *samajas* or the hierarchy of castes living within the territory. Each caste had its own council which settled disputes relating to caste and family affairs. The *Raja* was the headman of his own caste council, as well as the head of all the councils in his chiefdom. The *Raja* provided protection for his subjects, settled caste and other disputes, and maintained law and order. He and his followers arranged for the colonisation of new lands and patronised the goods and services of the artisan and service castes. In return, he received revenue and loyal support. Thus, as Inden noted, all these caste groups in a medieval Bengali Hindu chiefdom, "were linked together in a complex economic system involving exchange of goods and services between client and patron."<sup>35</sup> There existed different levels of leader-

ship. But all these levels were tied to each other in fixed vertical relationships and at the apex stood the Raja, the most powerful patron in the whole chieftdom.

\* However, due to the late beginning of the process of Aryanisation, the rigours of caste system were never that strict in Bengal as they were in the heartland of Aryan civilisation. Indeed, before the establishment of an Aryan state in the fifth century A.D., the *varna* system had practically no social recognition here and for a long period even after that, along with the orthodox *varna* culture, the more liberal tribal cultures also maintained their parallel existence. There had been going on a constant process of absorption of the latter by the former, but as a result of this, the *varna* system itself also became more flexible.<sup>36</sup> True, the land grant inscriptions of this period, discovered from northern Bengal, indicate also the beginning of the Brahmanical domination. But the social divide between the Brahmins and the other autochthonous people (till about the eighth century A.D. we do not have reference to the existence of any other *varna*) of the region was not as yet significant enough, as there were non-Brahman grantees as well, who received the patronage of the state.<sup>37</sup> And there was also the simultaneous existence of Buddhism and Jainism, which obviously had an erosive effect on the ascendancy of the Brahmanical religion, the only exception to this situation occurring in western Bengal during the reign of Sasanka of Gauda (595-621 A.D.). The subsequent rise of Buddhism under the Palas (c.8th-12th century A.D.) must have further weakened the hold of the Brahmanical ethos on society, although the Pala rulers never showed disrespect to the Brahmins, nor tried to disturb, even formally, the existing social fabric based on the *varnashrama dharma*. The same situation occurred in the other contemporary states of Bengal, ruled by the Buddhist dynasties, the Kambojas (c.10th century A.D.) in northern and eastern Bengal, and the Chandras (c.10th-11th century A.D.) in eastern and southern Bengal. The social organisation during this period was understandably quite lax, as the demarcation lines between the *varnas* had not been drawn that sharply as yet. This was firstly because, Bengal had not developed until now her own *Smriti* system, which would structure the norms of behaviour for each of these social units. And then the majority of the population of the region were still outside the orbit of the *varna* system, although its coverage was expanding, gradually but surely.<sup>38</sup>

A vigorous resurgence of Brahmanism really took place during the

subsequent period when the Palas and the Chandras, the two indigenous Buddhist dynasties of Bengal, were replaced by the two immigrant orthodox Brahmanical dynasties, the Senas from Karnatic and the Barmans from Kalinga. It was during this period of Sena-Barmān hegemony (c. 11th-13th century A.D.) that Bengal witnessed the formalisation of the *varna* social organisation, as its behavioral norms were now rigorously structured by a number of Brahman *Smritikaras*, beginning from Bhavadēvabhatta of the late Pala period, down to Jimutbahana, Aniruddhabhatta and the Sena King Ballala Sena himself in the late twelfth century.<sup>39</sup>

In order to preserve the Brahman domination over society, the upper *varna* was now surrounded with all sorts of ritual symbols which marked out the social distance between them and the rest of the society. But still this social exclusivism was not complete, as marriages across the *varna* lines, both downward (*anuloma*) and upward (*pratiloma*) were not uncommon. This led to the emergence of many mixed castes or *Sankara jatis* described in the thirteenth-fourteenth century *Puranas*, and they were readily accommodated within the existing social organisation.<sup>40</sup> Even when Ballala Sena introduced *Kulinism*, once again to demarcate the lines separating certain categories of Brahmans from the rest, he did it on the basis of nine types of qualities,<sup>41</sup> and not simply on the basis of birth, though later on the system was freely abused. The Muslim conquest of Bengal in the thirteenth century and the disappearance of state support led to further slackening of the rigours of caste system. The lack of discipline was particularly evident as far as the norms of interaction between the different castes were concerned. The *bhakti* movement in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries under Sri Chaitanya and his disciples had a further corrosive impact. The ideology of *bhakti*, by offering an alternative to ritualistic Brahmanical religion provided a "theological platform whereupon the highest and the lowest might stand with equal rights, ... where individual superiority was measurable only by personal devotion".<sup>42</sup> A Brahmanical reaction to these levelling consequences of the *bhakti* movement was also quite expected and this came in the form of the *Navyasmriti* literature of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. The most important *Nibandhakara* of this period was Raghunandana, whose *Astabingsatitattva* had been a vigorous conservative attempt to reestablish the disciplines of caste system. To refurbish the exclusivist ethos, he defined afresh the ritual symbols and codes of behaviour that constituted the demarcation lines separating the different

castes. To consolidate once again the dominant social position of the Brahmans, he also tried to restrict interaction between them and the other Sudra castes, particularly as far as marriage and commensality were concerned. But even then, social discipline could not be enforced rigorously and violations of these norms were not infrequent. Hence to conserve the social fabric, there were also liberal prescriptions of *prayaschitta* or penance, through which one could attain ablu-  
 ✓ tion of sins accruing from involuntary violations of caste rules.<sup>43</sup> The *Mangalakavyas*, related to the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, give us the picture of a fragmented society, but not of a rigidly segregated conservative society in medieval Bengal.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, as far as the reality is concerned, the pre-colonial Bengali society was never quite rigidly structured or hopelessly immobile as the study of some of the idealised texts would suggest. For the ideal situation did not always exist. In 1798, Colebrook remarked : "Daily observation shows even Brahmins exercising the menial profession of a Sudra ... Every profession with few exceptions, is open to every  
 ✓ description of person."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, medieval Hindu society, in spite of its caste orientation, did permit occupational mobility in keeping with the changes in the opportunity structure. The breaking of vast waste lands acted as a kind of economic frontier absorbing spillovers from other professions and thus providing for vertical social mobility for different social groups.<sup>46</sup> Equally significant was the rise of different warrior groups from low social rank. As a consequence of their acquisition of political power, they began to assert claims to higher birth, an ideal example of such mobility in Bengal being the rise of the Bagdis under Sobha Singh in the late seventeenth century.<sup>47</sup> Apart from this, technological achievement and commercial success also led to vertical social mobility. The emergence of new technology or the advancement of the existing one often led to different artisan groups forming separate sub-castes and claiming higher ritual rank. And then the coming of the European traders—the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English—opened up new opportunities for different trading groups who had been formerly operating within closed markets and, therefore, could seldom rise above the subsistence level. Many of them now acted as the compradors of the European com-  
 ✓ panies, amassed wealth and in course of time attained promotion to higher ritual rank.<sup>48</sup> It was this relative flexibility and internal dynamism which sustained the caste system through ages by successfully absorbing and neutralising the tensions from below. The up and push-

ing dominant groups were accommodated from time to time at higher levels within the hierarchy of castes. The structure itself was thus basically left intact, through the maintenance of, as Owen Lynch would call it, a "dynamic equilibrium"<sup>49</sup>.

### III

A process of change is supposed to have set in with the coming of the British. Colonial rule released certain forces that tended to threaten the very fundamentals on which stood the traditional society. Bengal, being the earliest seat of British colonialism, felt its first impact. The political regime of the traditional type was substituted by a modern type of government and the village was inserted into a larger economic and political framework. The penetration of the British administration into the interior, the introduction of British law and the establishment of law courts corroded the power base that provided sustenance to the caste-oriented stratification of the traditional Hindu society. A new system of surplus absorption replaced the old with apparently a new set of people appropriating it. "The system of production and exchange that arose in the Hindu society on the basis of family occupations" and which "lasted because of the bonds of cooperation it provided",<sup>50</sup> was now seemingly swept away before the onslaught of the market economy that gradually came into existence under the aegis of the colonial government. Customary production relationship, it is often emphasized, was replaced by contract and as a result, caste was detached from the economic system. Land became a marketable commodity and career was thrown open to talent. Frequent transfer of landed rights as well as new opportunities in trade led to greater diffusion of wealth across caste lines. The element of competition was thus introduced in a society that was previously non-competitive. The spread of education, the impact of western liberal ideas and a growing urban-industrial culture so seriously threatened the traditional social milieu, that many individuals and associations in the nineteenth century Bengal had started believing that caste system would wither away automatically.<sup>51</sup>

But this expected collapse did never take place. Even in the third decade of the twentieth century more than ninety-nine per cent of the Bengali Hindus mentioned their caste status when the census enumerators knocked at their doors.<sup>52</sup> This was mainly because the so called levelling influences of the colonial rule, instead of pulling out

✓ the individuals from the primordial social aggregates, had in fact led to a rejuvenation of such social ties.<sup>53</sup> It has been argued recently that caste was not a primary unit in the social relations of the Hindus. Instead, Karen Leonard found families, kin-groups and marriage networks as the "characteristic social units" among the Hyderabad Kayasthas, attempts to construct or impose broader sub-caste or caste units assuming only "limited importance at sometimes of stress and conflict".<sup>54</sup> But the Kayasthas were traditionally a higher and prosperous caste who had at their disposal a greater amount of patronage and resources that had to be kept under the control of closed in-groups. But this was pointless for the members of a less prosperous lower caste, for whom almost the entire life cycle was full of "stress and conflict". Moreover, greater occupational mobility and spread of education during the colonial period had whipped up their status aspirations and at the same time had made them more conscious of the social deprivation they had been subjected to in the past. Handicapped as they were in many ways, they now needed greater horizontal solidarity to wage their battle for more power and patronage in this new competitive world. Hence, in spite of the various inner divisions, as marked by both class differentiation as well as by the existence of different endogamous and exogamous units within an occupational *jati*, its members could and did work out, at least in certain cases, a broader group-solidarity or forged a greater community-consciousness while confronting the outer world. But that they thought of being organised in terms of caste rather than class was partly because, in their mental world, caste was still the most valid and perhaps the only real broad social category which they could easily refer to for social mobilization. This was also because the leaders of these movements, (whom in different contexts, Washbrook has called the "publicists" and O'Hanlon the "polemicists"), consciously tried to evolve a caste ideology ✓ through a reinterpretation of history and skilful manipulation of traditional cultural contradictions and symbols. In this way, new political and cultural identities for the lower castes were formed and around these, effective social mobilization was made possible.<sup>55</sup> The colonial policies also reinforced this structural pluralism in Indian society by distributing patronage on the basis of the caste status of individuals, who were thus compelled, by the logic of the politics of numbers, to stay within that group for social and political identity in institutional life. Caste thus began to lose its ritual content and became more and more secularized as a focal point for political mobilization.

But these lower caste movements were not always mere responses to colonial inducements. While the leaders felt attracted to such institutional benefits, the masses were often imbued with a spirit of protest against material deprivation and social humiliation, or as Kathleen Gough has put it, with a desire for "ethnic freedom"<sup>56</sup>. Indeed, a caste movement became powerful only when there was a convergence of these two levels of consciousness: the aspirations of the elites and the grievances of the masses. Such effective movements often had a radical potential of bringing about some fundamental structural change in society, as Gail Omvedt found it in western India.<sup>57</sup> But this initial possibility often got lost in the whirlpool of institutional politics operating within the competition-collaboration syndrome. As the elite leadership became more concerned with concessions and patronage that could be earned through a loyalist political strategy, the movements gradually lost their mass appeal. This process of divergence between the two levels ultimately led to the weakening of the movement itself. And thus, contrary to the supposition of Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, the caste associations did not always bring about a modernisation of politics by communicating to the masses the complexities of modern, i.e., institutional politics in their own familiar traditional language.<sup>58</sup> This horizontal expansion did not take place simply because in most cases the supposed convergence did not occur and the membership of these associations remained limited only to the educated members of the caste. The illiterate and ignorant masses not only remained outside these organisations, but, as in some areas in Bengal, recently explored by Sudhir Chakraborti, lived in an autonomous mental world, which even repudiated caste system under the levelling influence of certain radically liberal local religious sects.<sup>59</sup> These autonomous realms of consciousness remained untouched by these caste organisations or even perhaps unknown to their elite leaders. Thus a caste association did not always represent the ideas and aspirations of an entire community. David Arnold, Robin Jeffrey and James Manor have argued that a caste association, even if it had only a dozen members, expressed "the embryonic ideas and aspirations of a far larger social group". It is perhaps pointless to stretch it that far. For, although these articulate members were responding to "complex economic and political forces invading the entire community",<sup>60</sup> their ideas often died at this embryonic stage itself, without making any broader impact on society or polity and sometimes not even on their own communities.

However, the fact that some of these caste associations suffered from

✓ such limitations of ideology or participation need not detract our attention from the other more effective movements, that succeeded in mobilizing the entire community, or at least a greater portion of it, by generating an articulate community consciousness based on a sense of caste identity. True, their leaders could not ultimately utilise the protest mentality of the masses to bring about any radical social change, and themselves got embroiled in council politics or faction-fighting. But in the process, caste was made into a political category or, indeed, an interest group in the organised institutional politics in Bengal, as in other parts of India. This prevented, to some extent, a cross-caste political mobilization for our battle against colonial rule. This is in fact, the central argument of the present study, which is primarily concerned with some such organised movements of the lower castes of Bengal.

During the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, caste was thus going through a process of politicisation, which was conditioned essentially by the colonial context. The first chapter of this book, therefore, deals with the evolution of this colonial discourse on caste and shows how colonial ethnographers looked at the caste system and discovered in it a central dichotomy, with the privileged higher castes at the one end and the deprived lower castes and the untouchables at the other end of the spectrum. The second chapter would seek to delineate the process how on the basis of this assumption the colonial policy of 'protective discrimination' was evolved to provide concessions and special privileges for the deprived sections of the Hindu community, along with the Muslims. These new recipients of special government favour were first described in official documents as the "depressed classes" and were then classified under a more value-free term the "Scheduled Castes". The third chapter will deal with the responses of some of the organised lower castes of Bengal to the economic and social changes around them. It will show how a sense of protest was germinating in the mental world of some of these lower castes against social disabilities imposed upon them by the caste system. Gradually this sense of protest was further reinforced by the fact of social mobility arising out of the new economic opportunities created by the colonial rule. This led to the organisation of caste movements through the usual channels of "Sanskritization", "Westernization" and census agitations. In most cases, the terms of reference for these movements were those defined by the colonial discourse and, therefore, ultimately they became confined only to the institutional



framework provided by the colonial state. The fourth chapter will show how the growing status aspirations of the leaders of some of these lower castes made them more and more dependent on state patronage. As the nationalists failed to meet the grievances and accommodate their ambitions within the general framework of the anti-imperialist struggle, the colonial policies lured them into another path. When the colonial state began to distribute its rewards and concessions on the basis of the caste status of individuals, the compulsions of the politics of numbers forced the leaders of those listed castes to mobilize people along caste lines, as this strength of numbers would further legitimise their demand for more such privileges. What developed through this process was a distinct 'depressed classes' politics which weakened the nationalist movement in the same way, though less effectively, as the Muslim break-away politics. This politicisation of caste, along with religion, was virtually complete by 1937, when for the first time in the constitutional history of India, the representatives of these castes were elected to the Bengal legislature in 30 seats exclusively reserved for them. This election, which thus formally conferred a distinct political status on the 'Scheduled Castes', as they were now known in official parlance, offers a convenient closing point for the present study. It begins from the year 1872, which witnessed both the first census and the first organised protest of a 'depressed' caste, the Namasudras of eastern Bengal. In the 1940's, the contours of this particular type of politics developed further. But this maturing process remains outside the scope of the present study, which deals primarily with its socio-cultural as well as political roots.

## NOTES

1. For example, Barrington Moore, Jr., has talked about its negative impact, while Irfan Habib and Kathleen Gough have emphasized the role of caste as a mobilizing force. See, Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, (Preregrine Book, 1977), p.383; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, (Bombay, 1963), p.332; Kathleen Gough, 'Indian Peasant Uprisings', in A.R.Desai, (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India*, (New Delhi, 1981), Paperback edition, p.87.
2. Amalek Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge*, (Calcutta, 1967); Anil Seal, *The Emergence of India Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1968); J.H.Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth Century Bengal*, (California, 1968); John Gallagher, 'Congress in Decline : Bengal 1930 to 1939', in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal, (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation : Essays on Indian Politics*, (Cambridge, 1973); Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-8*, (New Delhi, 1973); 'Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-co-operation, c.1905-1922', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol.III, (Delhi, 1984); Leonard Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940*, (New Delhi, 1979); Rajat K. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, (Delhi, 1984); Tanika Sarkar, *Bengal 1928-1934: The Politics of Protest*, (Delhi, 1987).
3. See, for example, Robert Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnad*, (Berkeley, 1969); Eugene Irschik, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969); David Washbrook, 'The Development of Caste Organisation in South India, 1880 to 1925' in C.J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook, *South India : Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, (Delhi, 1975); Lloyd I. and Susanne H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, (Chicago, 1967); Robin Jeffrey, 'The Social Origins of a Caste Association : The Founding of the SNDP Yogam', *South Asia*, Vol.IV, October, 1974; Eleanor Zelliot, 'Learning the Use of Political Means : The Mahars of Maharashtra', in Rajani Kothari, (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics*, (New Delhi, 1973); Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society : The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873-1930*, (Bombay, 1976); Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict & Ideology : Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India*, (Cambridge, 1985); Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste', in McKim Marriott, (ed.), *Village India*, (Chicago, 1955).
4. See for example, Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, (Princeton, 1964); David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, (Princeton, 1974); V.C. Joshi, (ed.), *Rammohan Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India*, (Delhi, 1975); Amalek Tripathi, *Vidyasagar, the Traditional Moderniser*, (Calcutta, 1976); Asoke Sen, *Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestone*, (Calcutta, 1977); even Pradip Sinha's

*Nineteenth Century Bengal : Aspects of Social History*, (Calcutta, 1965) does not give us adequate information on the subject, although it is the first book which had drawn our attention to the development of caste based social mobility movements in Bengal.

5. For example, James Wise, *Notes on the Races, Castes and Tribes of Eastern Bengal*, (London, 1883); H.H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vols. I & II, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1981); Jogendranath Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects*, (Second Edition, Calcutta, 1968); N.K. Dutta, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. II, (Calcutta, 1969).
6. Nirmal Kumar Bose, 'Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal', in Milton Singer, (ed.), *Traditional India : Structure and Change*, (Philadelphia, 1959); *The Structure of Hindu Society*, translated from Bengali by Andre Beteille, (New Delhi, 1975); S.N. Mukherjee, 'Caste, Class and Politics in Calcutta', in E.R. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, (eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, (Cambridge, 1970); Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1981); Ramakrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, (Berlin, 1957); Jyotirmoyee Sarma, *Caste Dynamics among the Bengali Hindus*, (Calcutta, 1980), Amitabha Mukhopadhyay, *Jatibhedpratha O Unish Sataker Bangali Samaj*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1981).
7. A recent study, following this method of analysis, has shown how almost in an identical way, political separatism was developing among the Bengali Muslims during roughly the same period. cf. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengali Muslims, 1871-1906 : A Quest for Identity*, (Delhi, 1981).
8. Mukundaram, *Chandimangal*, edited by Sukumar Sen, Sahitya Academy, (New Delhi, 1975), pp.77-81; Vijaya Gupta, *Manasamangal*, edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, (Calcutta, n.d.), pp.4, 59-61.
9. For details see, Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, (London, 1972), Chapter 4; E.R. Leach, *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan*, (Cambridge, 1960), Introduction; Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, pp.16-26.
10. Louis Dumont, *op.cit.*, p.134.
11. Louis Dumont, *op.cit.*, p.131; Irawati Karve, *Hindu Society—An Interpretation* (Third Edition, Poona, 1977), p.16.
12. Ronald Inden, *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture*, (New Delhi, 1976), pp.14-21.
13. Bani Chakraborti, *Samaj-Sanskarak Raghunandan*, (In Bengali), (Second edition, Calcutta, 1970), pp.246-248, 255, 259.
14. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, pp.22-26.

15. See, Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971) pp.4, 188-191.
16. The notions about water as a carrier of pollution had such a pervasive influence on society that almost the entire network of social relationships among individuals and groups had been reduced to what may be called 'water acceptance relationships'. In one of his dance-dramas, Rabindranath Tagore tried to expose the hollowness of this ritualistic norm of social relationship. 'The dark monsoon cloud', exclaimed his untouchable heroine, 'if you call it a Chandal, does it lose its caste and its water get polluted?' See, 'Chandalika' *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Birth Centenary Edition, Govt. of West Bengal, (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.), Vol.4, p.559.
17. *Brihaddharmapuranam*, edited by H.P. Shastri, Bibliotheca Indica, Asiatic Society of Bengal edition, (Calcutta, 1888), p.578; *Brahmavaivartapuranam*, edited by Panchanan Tarkaratna, (Calcutta, 1391 B.S.), pp.22, 25-27.
18. Niharranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas, Adi Parba*, Vol. I, (in Bengali), (Third edition, Calcutta, 1980), p.18.
19. Irawati Karve, *op.cit.*, p.19.
20. Panchanan Mandal, *Chithipatre Samajchitra*, Vol.I, Part I, (in Bengali), (Santiniketan, 1968), p.161.
21. Narendranath Bhattacharya, *Bharatiya Jativarna Pratha*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1987), p.79.
22. Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, pp.314-315.
23. Narendranath Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, p.79.
24. Panchanan Mandal, *op.cit.*, p.161.
25. Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, pp.312-316.
26. *Ibid*, pp.316-319; Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, pp.37-38.
27. The legends say that the ritual status of the Kaibarttas was raised by the Sena king Ballala Sena in the second half of the twelfth century and previously they did not enjoy the status of a *ajalcharaniya* caste. see, Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, p.271.
28. The legends also refer to Ballala Sena demoting the Subarnabaniks to the rank of an *ajalchal* caste, as one of them had refused to lend him money on one occasion. See, *ibid*, p.271; also see, Rashbehari Mullick, *Vaisya Itihas*, (in Bengali), Vol.I, (Calcutta, 1369 B.S.), pp.40-42.

29. Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, pp.320-321; Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, p.38; *Census of India*, 1901, Vol.VI, Part I, pp.372, 380.
30. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, pp.19, 26.
31. Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, pp.324-325.
32. Irfan Habib, 'The Social Distribution of Landed Property in pre-British India', *Enquiry*, New Series, Vol. II, No. 3, Winter 1965, p.73.
33. Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt have called this system the 'Indian caste feudalism'. See, 'The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, 1979.
34. See, Ronald Inden, 'Hindu Chieftdom in Middle Bengali Literature', in Edward C. Dimock, Jr., (ed.), *Bengal : Literature and History*, (East Lansing, Michigan, 1967), *passim*.
35. *Ibid*, p.25; also see, Mukundaram, *Chandimangal*, *op.cit.*, pp.68-69, 75, 78-81.
36. Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, pp.277-280.
37. See, Swapna Bhattacharya, *Landschenkungen und Staliche Entwicklung in Frauehmittelalterlichen Bengalen 5. bis 13. Jh. n. chr.* (in German), (Wiesbaden, 1985), pp.150, 160. I am indebted to Dr Bhattacharya for the English translation of the relevant portions of her book.
38. Niharranjan Ray, *op.cit.*, pp.296-301.
39. *Ibid*, pp.302-306.
40. *Brihaddharmapuram*, *op.cit.*, p.578; *Brahmavaivarttapuranam*, *op.cit.*, pp.22, 25-27.
41. Ramnarayan Tarkaratna, *Kulinkulosarbasya*, (in Bengali), (Bangabasi second edition, Calcutta, 1854), p.14.
42. Ramakanta Chakravarti, *Vaisnavism in Bengal, 1486-1900*, (Calcutta, 1985), pp.76-78.
43. Bani Chakraborti, *op.cit.*, pp.13-14, 33, 147-148, 246-261.
44. Both *Chandimangal* of Mukundaram and *Manasamangal* by Vijaya Gupta refer to caste as just occupational groups. The order in which these different castes are mentioned in *Annadamangal* of Bharatchandra speaks of a hierarchy, but there is no indication of social segregation. See, Mukundaram, *Chandimangal*, *op.cit.*, pp.77-81; Vijaya Gupta, *Manasamangal*, *op.cit.*, pp.4, 59-61; Bharatchandra, *Annadamangal*, in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das,

- (ed.), *Bharatchandra Granthavali*, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Third edition, (Calcutta, 1369 B.S.), pp.170-171.
45. Quoted in G.S. Ghurey, *Caste and Class in India*, (Bombay, 1957), p.17.
  46. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, pp.17,50.
  47. For details see, Aniruddha Ray, 'Revolt of Shova Singh—a case study', *Bengal Past and Present*, July 1969 and January 1970; also Gautam Bhadra, *Mughal Juge Krishi Arthaniti O Kirshak Bidroha*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1983), pp.165-168; for similar situations in South India, see Burton Stein, 'Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Sects', in James Silverberg, (ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, (The Hague, 1968), p.78.
  48. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *op.cit.*, pp.26, 28, 54-55.
  49. Owen Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability : Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India*, (New York and London, 1969), p.12.
  50. N.K. Bose, *The Structure of Hindu Society*, *op.cit.*, pp.137, 143-144.
  51. See for example, Shibnath Shastri, *Jatibhed*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1884), edited by Dilip Biswas, (Calcutta, 1963), p.30.
  52. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol.V, Part I, pp.423-424.
  53. For a detailed discussion on the elements of change and continuity, see my earlier essay, 'Caste and Society in Colonial Bengal : Change and Continuity', *The Journal of Social Studies*, (Dhaka), No.28, April 1985, pp.64-101.
  54. Karen I. Leonard, *Social History of an Indian Caste : The Kayasthas of Hyderabad*, (Delhi, 1978), p.285.
  55. Washbrook, however, does not attach much importance to ideology. He seeks to explain the emergence of caste associations in terms of a "highly complex publicist/patron relationship". The former, belonging to the "new service groups", tried "to develop the broader patterns of social linkage" through cultural and religious activities. But this they could achieve only with the patronage of the influential "magnates". In contrast to such theories of pure elite manipulation, the recent brilliant study of O'Hanlon shows how in the nineteenth century Maharashtra, "polimicists" like Jotirao Phule constructed a non-Brahman "ideology", rooted in mass consciousness and organised an articulate movement around it. See, David Washbrook, *op.cit.*, pp.176-177; Rosalind O'Hanlon, *op.cit.*, pp.255-308.
  56. Kathleen Gough, 'Indian Nationalism and Ethnic Freedom', in David Bidney, (ed.), *The Concept of Freedom in Anthropology*, (The Hague, 1963), *passim*.

57. See, Gail Omvedt, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
58. See, Lloyd I. and Susanne H. Rudolph, 'The Political Role of India's Caste Associations', in C.E. Welch Jr., (ed.), *Political Modernisation A Reader in Comparative Political Change*, (California, 1967).
59. Sudhir Chakraborti, *Sahabdhani Sampraday O Tader Gaan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1985); *Balahadi Sampraday Ar Tader Gaan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1986); for a recent discussion on the subject, based partly on Chakraborti's data, see Partha Chatterjee, 'Caste and Subaltern Consciousness', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies VI*, (Delhi, 1989).
60. David Arnold, Robin Jeffrey, James Manor, 'Caste Associations in South India: A Comparative Analysis', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.XIII, No.3, July-September 1976, p.354.

# 1

## Caste in Colonial Sociology

### I

The rapid expansion of the empire in India forced upon the British the task of developing an administrative system capable of exerting greater social control. This required a clear knowledge of the composition of the subject society and its belief system. But as far as the indigenous society was concerned, the colonial government and its civil servants found themselves bewildered by its complexities. Particularly the caste system, which to a large extent determined its structure, proved an enigma to these foreign rulers. It had already attracted the wrath of the missionaries and the academic interest of the Orientalists. The Christian missionaries were critical of the system, for it was, first of all, the social basis of Hinduism which they were out to destroy. And then, it was an impediment to social interaction between the native converts and the larger Indian society, thereby restricting the expansion of Christianity. The Orientalists, on the other hand, saw stability and order in the theory of caste and, therefore, respected it.<sup>1</sup> But in the late nineteenth century, administrative exigencies demanded a deeper analysis. Moreover, in the conservative atmosphere of this period, the European civil servants were more prone to look at Indian society in terms of its primordial social categories. Hence both the colonial administration and its civilian-turned-ethnographers felt attracted to the caste system, an institution they considered most uniquely Indian of all. The ethnological researches which they undertook in the late nineteenth century were their attempts to understand this intricate social formation. The tradition of official studies that had started with Francis Buchanan's survey of Bengal and Bihar in the early nineteenth century, therefore, developed further through the decennial census reports and the publications of the



civilian-turned-ethnographers—a tradition that was started in the mid-nineteenth century by Dalton and Sherring, and developed in the late nineteenth by Wise, Hunter and Risley, was completed in the early twentieth century by O'Malley, Hutton and Blunt. In all these official enquiries caste had occupied a position of considerable importance, in fact, the central position. And a lot of information was made available, which developed the imperial corpus of knowledge about the various aspects of Indian society in general, and caste system in particular.

So much effort on the part of the government as well as individual administrators to collect sociological and anthropological data about the Indian people may lead one to "wonder what use knowledge of marriage customs or a cephalic index would be to an administrator."<sup>2</sup> It is also possible to hazard a conclusion that "the intellectual curiosity of some of the early officials is mostly responsible for the treatment of caste given to it in the Census."<sup>3</sup> But motives less innocent are not difficult to detect. These official studies on caste, it is true, reflected anthropological interest and theories of the period and the anthropometric data which were collected were partly to satisfy such purely academic interest. But the fact that all these studies in the second half of the nineteenth century, without a single exception, were sponsored or aided by the government, indicates less academic motives as well or at least, their use for other than academic purposes.

The colonial government had in fact sponsored these studies for specific political purposes. First of all, perhaps motivated by the lessons of the Revolt of 1857, it wanted to know the customs of the land so that it could face more prudently the vexed question of social reform; and secondly, it wanted to have a better knowledge about the internal divisions of Indian society, in order to identify its allies who could be played effectively against the enemies. The colonial ethnographers also, as a result, looked at Indian society through this administrative prism. They ignored the functional and normative aspects of caste and overstressed only its structural implications. To them caste appeared to be a distinct structural entity, concrete and measurable, with definable characteristics. They overlooked the important fact that all these units were once tied to each other through inter-dependent relationship and thus constituted an organic whole.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, they represented Hindu society as a motley collection of such discrete social groups which could be quantified and classified for administrative purposes. In this multi-ethnic society they detected a central polarity, with

the privileged higher castes at the one end and the vast multitude of backward communities at the other. This particular tradition of colonial ethnography had started in the days immediately following the Revolt of 1857. It was formalised in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. When political developments necessitated a more concrete caste policy around this time, it was from this perception that such state policies emanated.

## II

In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the Orientalist discourse had established the image of a differentiated Indian society. Their scriptural approach had led them to conceptualise this society according to the prescriptions of the classical texts. There had been some abuses of the pristine forms, they agreed, as was evident in the latter-day versions of those ancient texts. But there was always a tendency to discard those later versions. They tried to retrieve from this "jungle of accretions and corruptions" the picture of what they thought to be an ideal Indian society. The outcome was the image of a static society that did not move either in space or in time—a society permanently divided, primarily into two religious communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, who had two different legal codes and thereby two different cultural and social traditions. The Hindus in their turn were thought to be dominated by the Brahmans, whose power was based on a monopoly of knowledge and who ruled over a hierarchy of castes. Each of these social units was portrayed as being governed by separate sets of social rules, enjoying fixed but different kinds of social rights and suffering permanently from varying degrees of social disability.<sup>5</sup> It was on these basic postulates that the colonial sociology evolved during the post-Orientalist era, i.e. after the traumatic experience of 1857. The primary emphasis of this period was to codify knowledge about the actual social situation through empirical research rather than studies of scriptures. But the official ethnographers could never fully get away from the earlier tradition, often confused between the ideal and the real situations and ultimately produced an imperfect or even distorted image of Bengali society.

In 1858, when the Indian empire passed out of the hands of the East India Company, the Queen's Proclamation assured the Indian people that due regard would be paid to their ancient rites, usages and customs. But to do this a detailed knowledge of the local situation

was a prime necessity. To meet this exigency, the new government, first of all, tried to compile a gazetteer for Bengal. The work had, however, been started much earlier by the Company's government when in the early 1840's H.V. Bayley wrote his *Bengal and Agra Gazetteer*, which contained short statistical accounts for each district in the area. Then in February 1855, the Court of Directors decided to have another detailed gazetteer for the districts in Lower Bengal and the Divisional Commissioners were asked to contribute articles towards its compilation.<sup>6</sup> The result was the *Gazetteer of India*, which later came to be known as 'Thornton's Gazetteer'. Even this was not considered adequate and, therefore, in July 1856 copies of this gazetteer were sent to different district officers for "obtainment from local sources of correct information with a view to ... (its) adaptation to present circumstances."<sup>7</sup> But in spite of reminders, there was hardly any response and the project fizzled out, though only for the time being.<sup>8</sup>

The Bengal Government next took up a novel scheme. It realised that there was "a great deal of statistical, administrative and historical information of real value in District Record Rooms which ... (were) now lost sight of and which if not preserved... (would) by the natural effect of the time and climate, become wholly lost." In early 1865, W.W. Hunter had already started his own researches in the Birbhum Collectorate. In September that year, the government of Bengal proposed to employ him "experimentally" for completing his researches and compiling a history of the district. If the result of this enquiry were successful, he might then be deputed to other districts until the whole of Bengal was reported on.<sup>9</sup> In November, the Government of India sanctioned his appointment,<sup>10</sup> and the outcome of this enquiry, as we all know, was the famous *Annals of Rural Bengal* (1868).

But while this enquiry was going on, another important development took pace. A Gazetteer for the Central Provinces, one of the most disturbed areas during the Revolt, was written under the orders of its Chief Commissioner, Temple. This encouraged the Government of India to think whether a similar work might not with advantage be compiled for other provinces as well.<sup>11</sup> The proposal was sent to the Home authorities in May and in August 1867, the Secretary of State, Northcote, approved of the scheme with reference to other parts of India, regarding which, as he thought, "the information on our records is at present deficient."<sup>12</sup> The project was set on foot and the Bengal Government ascertained that "a large collection of materials" was already in existence and they "only required to be picked out and uti-

*lised in a systematic manner.*"<sup>13</sup>

The Government of Bengal also thought that the time had arrived for the establishment of a special statistical department to be placed under an officer who should devote his whole time to it and who might also be entrusted with the compilation of the proposed gazetteer.<sup>14</sup> But the Government of India, although it appreciated the usefulness of such a department, not only in Bengal but throughout India, refused to sanction it for it would "involve a very heavy outlay". Instead, it instructed the Bengal Government to confine its attention to the much smaller question of collecting existing materials for the preparation of a gazetteer and to finish it within a year or eighteen months at the most.<sup>15</sup> In a revised proposal the latter sought the permission to employ Hunter as a Special Officer, entrusted only with the preparation of the gazetteer of the Lower Provinces. The proposal was subsequently approved and the work was started in right earnest.<sup>16</sup>

But how was such a gazetteer going to help? The Government of course, had its own views. "Such a work", as Dampier, then the Additional Secretary to the Government of Bengal, noted in February 1869, "should contain a historical, geographical and statistical account of each district of Bengal, ... special attention being given to all places which derive an importance, either from political associations... or from commercial consideration... or from recent events." The undertaking, if carried out properly, would render "a work of great practical utility to the Officers of the Government", for it would provide an intelligible account of "*a population of at least forty millions of many races and creeds, and representing interests so important and so varied*". It might also subserve the earlier recommendation of the Statistical Committee regarding a general Gazetteer of India, by forming a nucleus round which works on other provinces could gather.<sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously with this project, the government was also sponsoring ethnological enquiries, apparently to cater for scientific minds in India as well as in England. In 1861 the Secretary of State asked the Government of India to procure photographs of "a few characteristic specimens" of "the more remarkable Tribes to be found in India". These were to be displayed in the International Exhibition to be held in London in 1862. Provincial governments were instructed accordingly and were given a list of such "Tribes". They were, of course, not to be bound by the list alone, if other specimens of interest could be found; only the photographs had to be "large enough to exhibit both the chief physical peculiarities and the distinctive

costume of each race". The collection when complete, the government observed, would be of "much scientific value."<sup>18</sup>

The list of "Tribes" the government circulated for this purpose, however, indicates some interesting aspects of the mind of the civilians who had prepared it. The "Tribes" which were listed for Bengal proper, fall into four broad ethnic categories. The first included the immigrant "Koolin Brahmins (Mookherjee, Chatterjee, Banerjee, Gangooli)" and the "Tribes who accompanied Koolin Brahmins in Bengal" like "Ghose, Bose, Dutt, Mitra". To the second category belonged "some of the principal agricultural races" and "commercial races" while the third incorporated the whole range of tribal population. The fourth category consisted of the various heterogeneous racial elements among the residents of Calcutta, such as "*Moguls*", "*Parsees*", "*Armenians*" and "*Jews*".<sup>19</sup> The Commissioner of Bhagalpur Division, perhaps, could understand the implications correctly. "It is not...intended", he inferred, "that pictures should be taken of each caste separately...but only of *distinct races*."<sup>20</sup> The concept of a multi-ethnic society and its central polarity thus seems to have taken shape in the minds of the imperial policy-planners. The Bengal collection was finally completed in July 1862 by Dr Simpson, then the civil surgeon of the 24-Parganas.<sup>21</sup>

A few years later, a more interesting proposal came from the Asiatic Society. It issued a circular requesting all who were in a position to do so to contribute skulls in order to illustrate the ethnology of India. But Dr. J. Frayer of the Calcutta Medical College thought that a study of live samples would be more advantageous for an anthropological investigation and suggested that the society should seek the aid of the government for "bringing together in one great ethnological exhibition, typical examples of the races of the old world", and to make them "subject of scientific study". "Such a gathering", he thought, "might well take place after the fashion of the late Exhibition, at Ali-pore, of the lower animals and products of the country". The project might "at first seem rather a startling one", he admitted. But if "carried out in a liberal spirit", it might yield valuable scientific knowledge about various sections of the human race.<sup>22</sup> The Council of the Asiatic Society were unanimous in regarding the proposition as "one highly calculated to advance the science of Ethnology", and sent a scheme to the Government of India for their approval. It proposed, first of all, to bring together in a Congress "typical examples of all the races of man found scattered throughout the Asiatic Continent and

the Pacific Archipelago" as this geographical area had in it "the first residence of primeval man."<sup>23</sup> However, as a preliminary step to the maturing of this grand scheme, it also proposed to the Government of Bengal to organise on a smaller scale at Calcutta such an Ethnological Congress of the tribes found in Bengal, Nepal, Burma and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.<sup>24</sup>

Although the proposed Congress never took place, instructions had been issued by the Bengal government to all commissioners for the preparation and submission of lists of men found in their respective divisions.<sup>25</sup> They were also asked to submit brief statements with regard to each race, which they thought could be "classed apart".<sup>26</sup> When the reports were received, Colonel Edward T. Dalton, then the Commissioner of Chota Nagpore, compiled them into a book, entitled *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, which ultimately came out in 1872. As the Inspector General of Registration observed, it was expected to "afford much valuable assistance in the compilation of the *statement of nationalities* for the census report".<sup>27</sup>

The census reports, as a modern expert comments, reflected the "official mind" if not the actual situation. The Government "viewed the census as a critical source of information on which policies could be based or assessed" and hence "continually tried to make the finding as useful as possible."<sup>28</sup> During the Company's rule, there was a census of Nagpore in 1821 and another of the South West Frontier Districts about the year 1844. In addition to these, the cities frequently had their population enumerated and there was also the practice of taking yearly census in British Burma and the Straits Settlement.<sup>29</sup> At an informal level, in many areas there had been attempts at it by the Police through the *Chaukidars*, who were supposed to make a *Khanashumari* (house census) every year.<sup>30</sup> But in 1856, under instruction received from the Home authorities, the Government of India entered upon a consideration of the means by which a general census of the population of British India might be taken in 1861. The undertaking was, however, postponed in 1859, in consequence of the Revolt. It was felt that it would not be "prudent to make a general enumeration of the people so soon after the violent disturbances by which a great portion of India had recently been agitated" and from which the country was "not even yet in all parts quite free".<sup>31</sup>

The proposal of a general census was, however, once again revived in May 1865, when the Bengal Government urged that considerations which had led to the postponement of the Census of 1861 no longer

existed. Moreover, "the want of anything like even an approximate knowledge of the population was much felt in every Department of Administration. "Concurring with these views, in June, the Governor General-in Council submitted to Her Majesty's Government a recommendation that arrangements should be made for undertaking a general census in 1871 and in September the scheme was approved.<sup>32</sup> But the Bengal Government later expressed its inability to conduct a census in 1871 simultaneously with other parts of India, because of expenses and inadequate administrative machinery.<sup>33</sup> The Bengal census was eventually taken in 1872, and it gave enormous details of caste nomenclature. But, in the absence of any standardised form and proper tabulation, it became difficult to deduce any order out of it.<sup>34</sup> A more systematic enquiry was, therefore, clearly called for. In the subsequent years a series of studies were undertaken or sponsored by the government in order to have such a streamlined version of the Indian social structure that would help policy-making as well as satisfy scientific interests.

### III

As a divisive force in Indian society, the potentiality of caste, along with religion, was being gradually perceived by the colonial government since the Revolt of 1857. One of the causes of the upsurge, as some of the officials suspected, was the fact that the army was overwhelmingly composed of natives from the higher castes, e.g., the Brahmans and Rajputs, who had greater social interaction among themselves and wider loyalty networks in the interior. The special commission appointed under Lord Peel to suggest reorganisation of the army, therefore, recommended: "The Native Indian army should be composed of different nationalities and castes as a general rule mixed promiscuously through each regiment".<sup>35</sup>

Suspicion of the high castes became a dominant theme in British administrative policies hereafter. The security of the empire came to be associated with the persistence of division in Indian society. As Charles Wood wrote to Lord Elgin in May 1862: "If all India was to unite against us how could we maintain ourselves?"<sup>36</sup> To prevent this unity, caste, along with religion, was considered to be an effective tool by many officials, like Sir Lepel Griffin.<sup>37</sup> James Kerr, the Principal of Presidency College at Calcutta, revealed this motive in 1865, in no uncertain words: "It may be doubted if the existence of

caste is on the whole unfavourable to the permanence of our rule. It may even be considered favourable to it, provided we act with prudence and forbearance. Its spirit is opposed to national union."<sup>38</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the image of a divided Indian society was taking shape in the minds of other British civilians as well. Eustace Kitts, for example, observed in 1885 that "India is a land inhabited by a large diversity of people, cut apart from one another by lines other and (in one sense) deeper than those which separate one European nation from another."<sup>39</sup>

M.A. Sherring had noted five years earlier than Kitts: "Caste dissolves the social compact found in other countries (and )...exercises the strongest power of disintegration the human race has ever been subjected to... In Europe the Hindu race is spoken of as an integer, which although separable into parts, is nevertheless a whole containing all the parts... But it would be much more correct to regard the numerous Indian tribes and castes as so many distinct integers complete in themselves, independent and unassociated."<sup>40</sup>

These observers were gradually shaping the colonial perception of Indian society, the caste system being the pivot of its organisation. There was always an awareness about the existence of the institution. But now there was also an administrative exigency to politicise this socio-cultural dichotomy in Indian society. This later on prompted the colonial government to collect more detailed ethnological data, both through census reports and specialised enquiries.

But apart from this urgency to know about the divisive potentiality of caste, there was perhaps another objective for such official ethnological studies. It was to have a clear knowledge about the customs and beliefs of the different groups of people that shaped the Indian milieu. The British administrators had become cautious about such things since the Revolt of 1857 which was caused to a large extent by the social reforms of the earlier period that had hurt the religious susceptibilities of the Indian people. Social reforms were once again being talked about by the leaders of Indian society and the government might any day be impelled to interfere.

But this the Government of Bengal wanted to avoid, for they believed that "more evil than good would be likely to result at the present time from any interference by Government in the socio religious questions which are now under consideration."<sup>41</sup> In October 1886 the Home department of the Government of India laid down three "general principles" : (1) when caste or customs involved a breach of



criminal law, the state would enforce the law; (2) when caste or custom laid down a rule which went against morality or public policy but was enforceable in civil courts, the state would decline to enforce it; but (3) "when caste or custom lays down a rule which deals with such matters as are usually left to the option of the citizens, and which does not need the aid of civil or criminal courts for its enforcement, state interference is not considered either desirable or expedient". And the legislature, they thought, "should keep within its natural boundaries, and should not by overstepping those boundaries place itself in direct antagonism to social opinion".<sup>42</sup> Accordingly nine years later, when Peary Lall, who was organising a movement among the Kayasthas of Bihar against extravagance in marriage ceremonies, solicited government help, the latter could promise only friendly cooperation with "the influential members of the community", who were expected to "take the lead in a matter of this kind".<sup>43</sup> Even while arranging the Darbar list in the early twentieth century, the government decided that "as far as possible, gentlemen should be seated according to their social status".<sup>44</sup> This social status was to be determined by caste and not by the nature of the government title which as a high caste Bengali title-holder himself believed, did "not give any distinction within society."<sup>45</sup> Hence, a thorough knowledge of the customs and the practices of the people was urgently needed. The extraordinary emphasis on ethnological enquiries during this period is, therefore, not at all difficult to explain.

Between 1875 and 1877 an important series of books, *The Statistical Account of Bengal*, came out under the general supervision of W.W. Hunter. The twenty volumes in the series, mainly compiled by the district officers, contained valuable statistical data, based mainly on the 1872 census, and important comments on all aspects of life in all the districts of Bengal. The sections on castes and occupations not only dealt with the numerical strength of each caste in the districts, but also gave important information about their traditional and present occupations, their customs and beliefs, as well as the regional variations in their social rank. Hunter had now been working as the Director General of Statistics to the Government of India. But in November 1877, after the publication of the series, he was given the new designation of the Director General of Gazeteers.<sup>46</sup> From now on, he was supposed to devote his full time to the compilation of the proposed gazetteers, which would incorporate more detailed and descriptive information about the districts, including the social and religious

life and the organisation of the native society in these administrative areas. The *Imperial Gazetteers*, under his editorship, started coming out from 1881. However, the publication of the provincial series had to wait till the beginning of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, ethnological studies in India had been given a great boost by Dr James Wise. He was for ten years the Civil Surgeon of Dacca and in that capacity had great opportunities of studying the social life of the people. He collected massive information concerning the religion, customs and occupations of the people in eastern Bengal as represented in the district of Dacca. He also employed a photographer in order to prepare an exhaustive illustrated monograph.<sup>47</sup> The greater portion of his materials came out from London in 1883, with the title *Notes on the Races, Castes and Tribes of Eastern Bengal*. It contained copious references to the special literature on the subject and evoked ethnological interest in the minds of many other civilians, Herbert H. Risley being the foremost among them.

The official effort to collect ethnological data was, however, still confined to census operations. The enormous information of the 1872 census had made the complex system of caste all the more confusing to the alien rulers. Hence to bring order out of chaos, more meticulous arrangements were made in 1881. 'Caste Index' volumes were published for each province, giving details of the numerical strength of each caste in every village. Apart from this attempt at quantification, it was also intended that castes would be classified by their social position. But this sparked off a controversy. Petitions started pouring in, complaining about the position assigned to castes to which the petitioners belonged. And "the whole subject was shrouded in so much uncertainty and obscurity that the original arrangement was dropped".<sup>48</sup>

The Census Commissioner, Plowden, therefore, suggested a few months later, that some special measures should be taken to collect full information regarding castes and occupations throughout India. A special officer should be appointed to deal with castes, while the regular district agencies would collect information about occupations. The Government of India strongly recommended his proposal, the results of which they considered "would be of great value." A circular was issued to all the provincial governments to ponder over the feasibility of the scheme, the expenditure for which had to be met from the provincial funds.<sup>49</sup> But it was the Bengal Government alone which took an active interest in the proposal and appointed Risley

as a Special Officer to undertake the survey. He was selected for the post because of "the aptitude he had displayed for the literary and ethnological enquiries."<sup>50</sup>

For administrative reasons, Risley took charge of the appointment one year later, and what he initially proposed to do was to conduct an "ethnographic enquiry into the customs of all castes and tribes in Bengal" which either formed "a substantial proportion of the population of any district or though numerically insignificant, .. (were) specially interesting from the scientific point of view."<sup>51</sup> He selected 165 local correspondents, both official and non-official, including Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in Howrah and Aswini Kumar Dutta in Bakarganj.<sup>52</sup> They were asked not merely to submit memoranda on all the castes and tribes found in their own districts, but also to arrange them "in order of social precedence" as it occurred in that particular region.<sup>53</sup> All these reports would then form the basis of an 'Ethnographic Glossary', containing all the necessary information about most of the important tribes and castes of Bengal, their customs, occupational status and social rank, both general and regional. Risley's plan, therefore, was to accomplish the task left unfinished by the census authorities in 1881.

But during these years another important idea was also taking shape in the mind of Herbert Risley. A few years back Sir Alfred Lyall had spoken of the "the gradual Brahmanisation of the aboriginal non-Aryan, or casteless tribes". Risley believed that this was a continuous process and was still "progressing on a large scale". He was already facing much difficulty in throwing light upon the true origin of the lower and the intermediate castes by collecting their customs and ceremonies which, in most cases, they had liberally borrowed from the higher castes. Hence, around June 1885, he began to think about "the possibility of applying to the leading castes and tribes of Bengal, the methods of recording and comparing typical physical characteristics" which had yielded valuable results in other parts of the world. And this could be done, he believed, by using Dr Paul Topinard's methods of anthropometric measurement.<sup>54</sup>

Risley had thus developed two distinct lines of enquiry. These were, as he himself described, an "ethnographic enquiry" into the customs and an "ethnological enquiry" into the physical features of the tribes and castes of Bengal.<sup>55</sup> But the question is, why had Risley planned such an elaborate and intensive investigation? And, above all, why did the government sponsor it?

In his memorandum Risley stated the objectives of his enquiry in unequivocal terms. First of all, the results of the enquiry "shall be useful, directly or indirectly, for the purposes of practical administration." And then, after "these official conditions" were complied with, it was "*further desirable*, that the operations should be carried on in a manner likely to yield results of *some* scientific value."<sup>56</sup> Administrative necessity, therefore, seems to have been his first priority. But how was such an enquiry going to help the administration? First of all, the proposed 'ethnographic enquiry' would identify and classify the different social groups that constituted Indian society. The "native society", Risley observed, "*is made up of a network of subdivisions governed by rules which affect every department of life*".<sup>57</sup> How that society "will behave under novel conditions, what use, for example, it will make of any particular form of political representation", were questions which, he believed, could not be answered without "a fairly minute knowledge" of the internal organisation of that society.<sup>58</sup> In other words, ethnic composition had to be taken into consideration in order to secure proper representation of the different segments of the society in the representative bodies, so that no particular group could monopolise political power. And this ethnicity had an economic connotation as well, for caste, as Risley supposed, was often "an index of wealth". Hence an Ethnographic Glossary would not merely ensure an equitable distribution of patronage, but would also facilitate "the assessment of any direct tax". The other purpose of the Ethnographic Glossary was to inform the government officers of the local customs, so that they could handle better the more concrete day-to-day administrative problems.<sup>59</sup> Risley's cautious suggestion was : "the more Government officers know about the religious and social customs of the people of their districts, the better able they will be to deal... with the possible social problems of the future."<sup>60</sup> An Ethnographic Glossary, therefore, was urgently needed.

The Government might not have shared the scientific interests of Risley, but it could hardly ignore the "substantial administrative benefits" of the proposed enquiry. "It had always been the policy of Government," it observed in a Resolution, "to encourage researches which tend to throw light upon the actual life of the general mass of the population, which even now is not adequately represented either by the vernacular newspapers, or by any of the various public bodies and associations." The census of 1881 had provided a sound statistical basis for further research, while recent events had served to bring to pro-

minent notice "the necessity for more minute knowledge on the part of Government officers of the actual usages and beliefs of the people at large". An ethnographic enquiry of the people was, therefore, "as desirable as a cadastral survey of the land". For, "social reforms are beginning to be discussed by the leaders of the native society, and a time may come when Government will be invited to exercise its influence in such matters."<sup>61</sup>

The Resolution which approved of Risley's scheme of enquiry thus reveals two expectations of the Government. First of all, it was searching for a depressed underclass, ignored by the vernacular press and left out by the public bodies, vis-a-vis the more privileged sections, "the leaders of the native society." Secondly, it wanted to have "a more minute knowledge" about Indian society in order to face the sensitive question of social reforms without hurting the sentiments of the masses or "the people at large". The supposed polarity in Indian society, with small sections of privileged upper castes at the top and the vast body of depressed lower castes at the bottom, had thus taken shape in the perception of the Raj. And this dichotomy had not merely a social or economic but a racial dimension too, which Risley was trying to find out through the second part of his enquiry, i.e. through ethnological survey.

Risley, while explaining the purposes of his enquiry, had observed that the "ethnological branch of the work will be of little or no use for administrative purposes, and will in fact interest a small number of persons in India and Europe."<sup>62</sup> But his assumptions and methodology betrayed other purposes as well. Risley had borrowed from Alfred Lyall the idea of a bi-racial composition of Hindu society, the higher castes belonging to the Aryan stock, and the lower castes being the non-Aryan autochthons of the land. The anthropometric methods, he believed, would "detach considerable masses of non-Aryans from the general body of Hindus."<sup>63</sup> Max Muller also largely concurred with these notions. He wrote in response to Risley's letter:

"In India we have first of all the two principal ingredients of the population - the dark aboriginal inhabitants and their more fair-skinned conquerors. Besides these two, there have been enormous floods of neighbouring races ... all mingling more or less freely, with the original inhabitants and among themselves. Hence, therefore, the ethnologist has a splendid opportunity of discovering some tests by which, even after a neighbourly intercourse lasting for thousands of years, the descendants of one race may

be told from the descendants of other".<sup>64</sup>

Risley, therefore, went in for anthropometric measurement in order to classify the different castes of Bengal into two broad categories according to their racial origin explicit in their physical characteristics. His anthropometric instructions to the enumerators reveal this objective adequately. While measuring the higher castes he asked his enumerators "to reject persons of very black complexion and with very broad and depressed noses", as in such cases there was the possibility of an intermixture of low-caste blood. Similarly among the lower castes, "men of very fair complexion and high caste type of feature" had to be rejected.<sup>65</sup> And the results of the enquiry, he believed, would be of much "political value" as they would demonstrate the ethnic composition of the population to be governed.<sup>66</sup>

After years of labour, Risley completed the four volumes of his book, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*. The first two volumes, which came out in print in 1891, contained the Ethnographic Glossary, while the next two dealt with anthropometric data.<sup>67</sup> A formal trend in ethnographic studies was thus established. It developed further during the next three decades, strongly and inescapably influenced by the Risley stereotype of a differentiated society, polarised into two broad categories.

#### IV

The Orientalist and the early official studies had thus sought to establish and regularise what Bernard Cohn has called "a discourse of differentiations".<sup>68</sup> In order to comprehend the vast social world of India, they had tried to classify it into certain fixed categories, which were defined, so far as the Hindus were concerned, in terms of caste status. But the categories identified so far were as yet nebulous or amorphous, in the sense that the colonial government until now had only some imperfect knowledge about their actual numerical position or relative socio-economic conditions. In other words, there was need for a more rigorous objectification and ordination of the categories in order to make them more useful for administrative purposes. The task was accomplished in the early twentieth century, primarily through the decennial census operations.

When Risley was undertaking his survey, an important proposal to acquire quantitative knowledge about Bengali society had been mooted. In September 1886, the Government of India enquired whether

the *Statistical Account of Bengal* could be revised and updated with the help of the district officers. The Bengal government initially approved of this suggestion. But, on second thought it was found "that the publication of a new edition... would not be of practical value." For the "figures in the revised edition would be out of date before they were published." Hence the plan was dropped,<sup>69</sup> although temporarily, to be revived again when the preparation of annual statistical abstracts became a regular practice.

A few years later, another proposal came from Risley himself. Even before his book was published, in December 1890, he submitted to the Bengal government a scheme for continuing similar ethnological researches in the Lower Provinces and for extending them to other parts of India.<sup>70</sup> But in the meantime started the census operations of 1891. And in this census the government had planned to collect extensive sociological data about the minutest divisions among the Indian people. The enumerators were asked to collect information not only about "Religion", but about "Sect of religion" as well and not merely on "caste & C", but on "Sub-division of Caste & c", too.<sup>71</sup> In addition to broad provincial data, district-wise breakdown was also made available in the district census reports. A large body of information describing and quantifying each of these social groups, both at macro and micro levels, was thus compiled for ready administrative reference.

But Risley's proposal was not fully rejected. In August 1891, the Bengal Government referred it to the Government of India. The local Governments were informed accordingly and almost all of them expressed their willingness to cooperate. But nothing as such was done immediately. Two years later, in early 1893, Risley revived his earlier proposal to prepare a revised edition of his *Ethnographic Glossary* and to expand it so as to include the whole of India. But the Government of India refused to approve it, for it thought, the "proposal if carried out, would be likely not only to swell the glossary to unwieldy proportions, but also greatly to delay its revision and to cause the revised work to consist of materials of very unequal value." The government, therefore, preferred the enquiries to be carried out on a provincial basis to be assisted, if possible, by the local Governments from the provincial funds.<sup>72</sup> The Bengal Government accordingly sanctioned in June, 1893 an expenditure of Rs.6,000 for the publication of a revised edition of Risley's *Ethnographic Glossary*, which would incorporate the statistical information compiled in the last census and as much additional matter as he could find time to collect.<sup>73</sup>

But before this new scheme could be carried out, Risley was appointed the Census Commissioner. And the census of 1901, which was conducted under his supervision, forms an important landmark in the history of census-based colonial sociology of India. In December 1899, when the preliminary arrangements for the coming census were under consideration, the British Association for the Advancement of Science recommended to the Secretary of State that certain ethnographic investigations should be undertaken in connection with the census operations. The census report, the Association thought, constituted a valuable ethnographic document in itself. It could be made even more valuable by incorporating certain easily ascertainable ethnographic data such as the history, structure, traditions as well as religious and social usages of various races, tribes and castes in India. This could be done without overburdening the census officials or incurring any large additional expenditure. Furthermore, the Census Commissioner, Risley, was himself an accomplished ethnographer who could efficiently supervise such a survey.<sup>74</sup>

The proposal of the Association was referred to the Government of India which in May, 1901 came to the following conclusion which throws some important light on the motives of the Government for incorporating sociological information in their census reports:

"The scientific importance of the investigations recommended by the British Association is admitted... and the Government of India are in entire agreement with this view... It is unnecessary to dwell at length upon the obvious advantages to many branches of administration in this country of an accurate and well-arranged record of the customs and the domestic and social relations of the various castes and tribes. The entire framework of native life in India is made up of groups of this kind, and the status and conduct of individuals are largely determined by the rules of the group to which they belong. For the purposes of legislation... and of almost every form of executive action, an ethnographic survey of India and a record of the customs of the people is as necessary an incident of good government as a cadastral survey of the land and a record of the rights of its tenants. The census provides the necessary statistics; it remains to bring out and interpret the facts which lie behind the statistics".<sup>75</sup>

In other words, to rule effectively the Government must know properly the customs and beliefs of the people, as well as the inner divi-



sions of the society both vertical and horizontal. The economic divisions could be brought out through cadastral surveys, while social divisions had to be determined through census reports.

The Resolution quoted above was probably drafted by Risley himself, for the same passage occurs in the introduction of his book.<sup>76</sup> And it was his enthusiasm and the Government's interest which explain the great attention paid to caste returns in the census of 1901. Risley's endeavours were not merely confined to the collection of descriptive and quantitative information alone. On this occasion he actually tried to classify each caste according to its place in Hindu society, both in terms of local hierarchy and more significantly, their *varna* affiliation. This he did for "presenting an intelligible picture of the social grouping of that large proportion of the people of India which is organised admittedly or tacitly, on the basis of caste."<sup>77</sup>

Simultaneously with the census operations, the Government of India had also devised a scheme for a more systematic and prolonged ethnographic survey of India. Under this scheme, prepared in May 1901, each local Government would appoint an officer who would, in addition to his normal duties, carry on inquiries to prepare a "systematic account of the tribes and castes of the province," somewhat in the form adopted by Risley and followed by Crooke. He was to be called the Superintendent of Ethnography and assisted by the district officers. The general direction of the scheme was to be entrusted to Risley whose official title would be for this purpose the Director of Ethnography for India. The Secretary of State sanctioned an expenditure of Rs 1,50,000 for this purpose for a period of four years. The Government of India believed that by "working on these lines... it will be possible to get a fairly complete account of the ethnography of the larger provinces drawn up within four or five years."<sup>78</sup>

In Bengal, E.A. Gait was appointed the first Provincial Superintendent of Ethnography. His "primary object", as he stated in his circular to the district officers, was "the collection of material for a fresh edition of Mr Risley's book on the *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*". The proposed work would incorporate "full information regarding castes and tribes not dealt with by Mr Risley". It would also correct "statements which are either not quite correct or require modification" and amplify "accounts which are not very full." It would also have a "discussion of the status and affinities of certain groups." But more significantly, it would also contain "similar information regarding Muhommadan castes." A new dimension was added to the existing

discourse of differentiation, perhaps, due to the political exigencies of the time. To encourage the district officers, arrangements were made with the Asiatic Society of Bengal for the publication of papers of sufficient merit in their journal with the names of the authors themselves.<sup>79</sup>

A close cooperation between the government and the Asiatic Society, for the purposes of ethnographic research, was developing for a long time. In 1892, a grant of Rs 2000 a year was sanctioned to the Asiatic Society in order to enable them to add a new section to their journal dealing with anthropology, ethnology and folklore. While this grant was continued, in 1908 a fresh annual grant of Rs. 3600 was sanctioned to provide for the establishment of a Bureau of Information under Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad Shastri. He was supposed to conduct "research work in connection with the history, religion, usages and folklore of this province and its people." And his "duty" was "to reply to any question that might be asked on the subjects mentioned above." The grant was sanctioned "in view of the importance to the officers of Government of a knowledge of the customs of the people of the country and their traditions and conditions of life."<sup>80</sup> The idea was that the Asiatic Society would become a centre of reference and Bureau of Information for all government officers in Bengal. But initially the officers themselves seemed to be less enthusiastic. In September 1915, a fresh circular was, therefore, issued "to bring the existence of the Bureau once more to the notice of all officers in the Presidency".<sup>81</sup> Such urgency during this particular period was perhaps due to the fact that the colonial perception of caste or ethnic relations in India had by now taken a concrete shape. The officers were supposed to act accordingly.

Meanwhile, the census operations of 1911 had also been completed and this had provided for further systematisation of this perception. It was on the eve of this census that the colonial Government had made the first direct attempt to develop a separate political identity among the lower castes, now known as the 'depressed classes' in official parlance. The new Census Commissioner, in his letter to the Provincial Superintendents in May 1910, had pointed out that there would be no classification of castes according to social precedence. But in another circular, dated 12 July 1910, he asked for separate classification of the "depressed classes".<sup>82</sup> Gait, the Provincial Superintendent in Bengal, accordingly issued a circular announcing separate

enumeration of the 'depressed classes' in the coming census. It became at once the target of attack by the nationalists, who saw in it a sinister political motive, allegedly prompted by the Muslim League. It was designed, they thought, to reduce the numerical superiority of the Hindus through non-recognition of certain untouchable castes as members of Hindu society.<sup>83</sup>

The measure was perhaps designed not to enhance the existing Hindu-Muslim dichotomy, as the nationalists suspected. But its main objective was to acquire information about relative demographic and socio-economic position of the caste Hindus and untouchables and thereby to politicise another dichotomy in Bengali society. The circular met with a strong opposition from all sections of the Hindu press, and the intervention of both the retiring and the in-coming Viceroys was sought in the matter.<sup>84</sup> On behalf of the Indian Association, Surindranath Banerjea sent a memorandum to the Government of India, urging the withdrawal of the notorious circular, which had created a "painful impression" in the mind of the Hindu community. He also objected to the classification of castes according to social precedence and the use of such derogatory adjectives, as "low castes" or "unclean castes" in the census reports. "It is not understood what good such a classification is intended to serve", he pointed out, "but the mischief sure to attend its appearance in an authorised Government publication is obvious". His other objection was against imposing rigidity on an otherwise dynamic system, by denying the individuals and communities the opportunity of returning themselves under new titles and new caste names.<sup>85</sup> It was, as we have seen earlier, an age old practice in Bengal, as in other parts of the country, which the colonial ethnographers had overlooked. And it is no wonder that Government, relying heavily on their conclusions, sought to frame its policies on the assumption of a static status hierarchy, with permanent social divisions.

However, the storm raised by the nationalists forced the Government to retreat, although temporarily. The circular was withdrawn on 10 December 1910, through a press communique, which stated that there would be no departure from the established practice regarding the enumeration of castes.<sup>86</sup> On this occasion, however, a comprehensive list of castes was prepared for Bengal. It contained 234 "Hindu, Buddhist and Animistic castes." There were 12 new caste entries, all of them being sub-castes that were accorded full caste status for the first time in this census.<sup>87</sup> The process of fission or disaggregation

was thus officially recognised and was in this way encouraged as well. The search for more information regarding this basic social dichotomy within the Hindu community also continued. For example, it was now felt that the government knew very little about vernacular terms of relationship and customs connected with kinship. This sort of information was considered necessary, for the French anthropologist, Jules Block, had shown in 1909 how the names of relationship differed among the high and the low castes in Madras.<sup>88</sup> In other words, caste distinction, it was realised, had a cultural dimension too, reflected in the use of dialects. This had to be explored in greater detail for the whole of the country. With this objective in mind, the Census Superintendent in Bengal instructed the district officers in June 1910 "to ascertain how far names of relationship differ among high and low castes" and "whether tribal castes, such as Doms, Chandals, and Nam-asudras, have the same names for their relatives as more orthodox castes."<sup>89</sup> The theory of a central dichotomy in Hindu society, as it seems, had by now taken a concrete shape in the perception of the Raj. The two components, as the colonial government believed, were structurally separate, not merely in terms of racial origin or economic position or social status. But they had different cultural and linguistic traditions too; a phenomenon discovered in South India had to be sought for in other parts of the country.

The separate enumeration of the 'depressed classes', which could not be undertaken in 1911 owing to public protest, was also secretly accomplished in 1917, when the Bengal Government prepared such a list that included twenty-one "untouchable Hindu and Animist castes or Tribes", six "Aboriginal and Hill Tribes" and four "Criminal Tribes"—thirty-one social groups in all.<sup>90</sup> Again in the census of 1921, a fresh list was made of the 'depressed classes'. In 1931, a separate chapter on such 'depressed classes' was added to the Census Report for Bengal and Sikkim. Through these attempts the colonial government sought to have a concrete idea about the actual composition of this new social category which it had managed to identify. But all these three lists included different sets of social groups, although some names were common in all of them. This anomalous situation was primarily due to a lack of objectivity on the part of the authorities responsible for such enumeration.<sup>91</sup>

It was, perhaps, not even possible to fix any such objective criterion either. Hence, when in the early twentieth century, the colonial government initiated the policy of protective discrimination in favour

of such social groups and in the 1930s provided for special representation for them in the legislatures, it was the subjective judgement of the Government alone that decided whether the "social and political" status of a particular caste was so "backward" as to deserve the special protection of the Government.<sup>92</sup> The social groups listed for these purposes in 1936 came to be known as the 'Scheduled Castes', a more value-free term than the previous 'depressed classes'. But in the institutional politics of the late colonial period, they came to constitute a new interest group with a separate political identity that was encouraged and sustained by the policies of the colonial government.

## V

Information is an essential tool for effective social control. And it is all the more necessary for an alien ruler. What almost every European colonial power felt in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries was the urgent need to understand their 'primitive' subject societies. Hence, as it happened in North America or in the East Indies, Africa or India, the ethnographers "followed the flag into their colonial empires". They were, first of all, supposed to make this "other society intelligible to the new colonial governors or administrators".<sup>93</sup> And then in a consolidating empire, they had to carry on social espionage to keep the colonial authorities informed about the beliefs, attitudes and temperaments of the governed. In India, the imperatives of an empire facing resistance forced upon the ethnographers new responsibilities, i.e., to determine the structure and identify the polarity of the subject society which had to be used to popularise the colonial regime. The ethnographers were, therefore, in great demand. They had to dissect, disaggregate and thus determine the structure of the subject society and at the same time provide an exhaustive as well as intelligible (to the foreign rulers) account of its customs and belief-systems.

The first thing that attracted the attention of these British official chroniclers of Indian society, was religion, or more particularly, religious differentiation. The two religious communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, were taken to be two distinct social groups, structurally separated, with different heritage, tradition, legal systems, customs and convictions, with no common point whatsoever. Then within the Hindu community, another form of structural separation was discovered and that is caste. The institution was uniquely Indian and, therefore, seemed

to be baffling to these foreign observers. But it was a phenomenon that could hardly be ignored, as it seemed to be the only key to the understanding of much of the social behaviour of the Hindus, "A man's caste", observed an early twentieth-century British ethnographer, "determines his place in Hindu society and consequently his relations with all other Hindus".<sup>34</sup> But they overlooked the most important fact about this structure of relationship, that it had been going through a continuous process of evolution. Movement up and down on the social plane, as mentioned earlier, was a regular feature in almost every stage of this evolution. The colonial ethnographers studied the system bounded in a particular time and space and, therefore, presented a static view of this structure of relationship, where every group had a fixed role defined by its permanent position in a status hierarchy. In this hierarchy they detected a central contradiction between the 'high' castes and the 'depressed classes', reflecting the age-old imbalance in the distribution of social opportunities. This streamlined version, which emphasized only the structural aspect of caste, sought to replace the more complex indigenous discourse in which, as we have discussed earlier, caste appeared as a multi-dimensional social institution, with functional, behavioural as well as structural implications. We have also seen that in Bengal, historically, the caste system was much less rigid than in other parts of the country. But this important regional variation was not taken into account in the new simplified colonial discourse which sought to make the intricate and diversified structure of Indian society more comprehensible to the colonial rulers. The colonial policies also reflected all these assumptions of colonial sociology. As the high castes questioned the legitimacy of the Raj, the colonial government sought to legitimise its rule by patronising the 'depressed classes', who needed this patronage much more urgently than any other social group. Both these categories, along with their various components had been identified, defined, quantified and classified into a fixed order of precedence by these civilian ethnographers and the Census Superintendents, who had thus become, perhaps unknowingly, the agents of an empire in strain, if not actually at bay.

## NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion on these early studies, see B.S.Cohn, 'Notes on the Study of Indian Society and Culture', in Milton Singer and B.S.Cohn, (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, (Chicago, 1968), pp. 6-15.
2. *Ibid*, p. 17
3. G.S.Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, (Bombay, 1957), p. 193.
4. For a discussion on caste system in pre-colonial Bengal, see Section II of the 'Introduction'.
5. For a recent discussion on the Orientalist discourse, see Bernard S.Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol. IV, (New Delhi, 1986).
6. T.B. Lane, Offcg. Secy., Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, to the Offcg. Secy., GB, 14 December 1867, GB, General, May 1886, Prog. No.85.
7. A.M.Monteath, Under Secy., GI, Home, to W.S. Seton-Karr, Secy., GB, 7 May 1861, GB, General, June 1861, Prog. No.10.
8. Dr.J.Forsyth, Principal Inspector General, Medical Dept., to H. Bell, Under Secy., GB, 27 June 1861, GB, General, September 1861, Prog. No. 23.
9. S.C. Bayley, Junior Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, 23 September 1895, GB, General, October 1865, Prog. No. 3.
10. W.E. Ward, Secy., Home, to Offcg. Secy., GB, 27 November 1865, GB, General, December 1865, Prog. No.13.
11. E.C.Bayley, Secy., GI, Home, to Offcg. Secy., GB, 30 May 1867, GB, General, July 1867, Prog. No.41.
12. Stafford H.Northcote, Secretary of State for India, to Governor General of India in Council, 23 August 1867, GB, General, May 1868, Prog. No. 84.
13. H.L. Harrison, Junior Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, 19 May 1868, GB, General, May 1868, Prog. No.91. Emphasis added.
14. *Ibid*.
15. J.Geoghegan, Under Secy., GI, Home, to Junior Secy., GB, 22, July 1868, GB, General, October 1868, Prog. No. 46.

16. J.Geoghegan, Under Secy., GI, Home, to Offcg. Junior Secy., GB, 6 November 1868, GB, General (Miscellaneous), February 1869, Prog. No.1.
17. H.L.Dampier, Adnl. Secy., GB to GI, Home, 2 February 1869, GB, General (Miscellaneous), February 1869, Prog. No.2. Emphasis added.
18. E.C. Bayley, Offcg., Secy., GI, Foreign, to Secy., GB, 17 June 1861, GB, General, July 1861, Prog. No. 13.
19. 'List of Indian Races of whom it is desirable to obtain Photographs', GB, General, July 1861, Prog. No.14.
20. W.L.F. Robinson, Offcg. Commissioner of Bhagulpore Divn., to Under Secy., GB, 26 July 1861, GB, General, December 1861, Prog.No.6.
21. A.Eden, Offcg. Secy., GB, to Secy., GB, Foreign, 18 July 1861, GB, General, December 1861, Prog.No.11.
22. Dr.J.Frayer, Professor of Surgery, Medical College, to J.Anderson, Secy., Natural History, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 16 December 1865, GB, General, March 1866, Prog.No.39.
23. J.Anderson, Secy., Natural History, Asiatic Society of Bengal, to E.C. Bayley, Secy., GI, Home, 8 March 1866, GB, General, March 1866, Prog. No. 39.
24. J.Anderson, Secy, Natural History, Asiatic Society of Bengal to Secy., GI, 8 March 1866, GB, General, March 1866, Prog.No.39.
25. J.Geoghegan, Offcg. Secy., GB, to Secy., Asiatic Society of Bengal, 16 March 1866, GB, General, March 1866, Prog.No.41.
26. J.Geoghegan, Offcg. Secy., GB to all Commissioners, 16 March 1866, GB, General, March 1866, Prog.No. 40. Emphasis added.
27. H.Beverly, Inspector General of Registration, to Offcg. Secy., GB, General, 31 July 1872, GB, General, November 1872, Prog.No.19, Emphasis added.
28. N.Gerald Barrier, (ed.), *The Census in British India: New Perspectives*, (New Delhi, 1981), Introduction, pp-viii-xiii.
29. Lt.Colonel J.C.Houghton, Commissioner, Cooch Behar Divn., to Secy., GB, 18 November 1867, GB, General, November 1868, Prog.No.17.
30. R.R. Chapman, Commissioner, Presidency Divn., to Secy., GB, 10 February 1868, GB, General, November 1868, Prog.No.26.



31. E.C.Bayley, Secy., GI, Home to Secy. GB, 20 September 1867, GB, General, November 1867, Prog.No.20.
32. *Ibid.*
33. N.Gerald Barrier, *op.cit.*, p.ix.
34. Frank F. Conlon, 'The Census of India as a Source for Historical Study of Religion and Caste', in N.Gerald Barrier, *op.cit.*, p. 109.
35. Quoted in G.S. Ghurye, *op.cit.*, p. 198.
36. Quoted in S.Gopal, *British Policy in India*, (Cambridge, 1965), p. 36.
37. G.S. Ghurye, *op.cit.*, p. 198.
38. Quoted in *ibid*, p. 199.
39. Eustace J.Kitts, 'Caste and Custom', *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 80, No. 159, 1885 p. 190.
40. M.A. Sherring, 'The National History of Hindu Caste', *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 71, No. 141, 1880, p. 27.
41. A.P. Mac Donnell, Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, 2 March 1886, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 90-38, April 1886.
42. Extract from Proceedings, GI, Home(Public), No. 35-1616-26, 8 October 1886, GB, General(Miscellaneous), File No.90-39, November 1886.
43. C.E. Buckland, Secy., GB, General, to all Commissioners of Divisions, Circular No. 1T-G, 16 May 1895, GB, General(Miscellaneous), File No. 8-M-1-3, May 1895, Prog.No.6.
44. W.R.Gourlay, Private Secy. to Lt.Governor of Bengal to Khan Bahadur Abdul Jabbar, K.B. Dalwar Hosain Ahmen, Rai Madhusudan Chowdhury Bahadur, Raja Ban Behary Kapur, Rai Kalika Das Dutta Bahadur, 21 June 1905, GB, Home(Confidential), File No.43 of 1905.
45. Modhusudan Chaudhuri to W.R.Gourlay, Private Secy. to Lt. Governor of Bengal, 17 July 1905, GB, Home(Confidential), File No. 43 of 1905.
46. GB, General(Miscellaneous), File No. 165, B November 1877, Progs. Nos. 1-2.
47. H.H.Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1981), Vol.I, pp. xiii-xiv

48. *Report on the Census of British India*, 1881, Vol. I, p.277.
49. 'Ethnographic Enquiries in Bengal', by H.H.Risley, (hereafter 'Ethnographic Enquiries'), 22 December 1886, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), March 1887, Colln. 1-49.
50. R.H.Wilson, Offcg. Secy., GB, Financial, to Secy., GI, Finance and Commerce, 5 July 1886, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), March 1887, Colln. 1-7.
51. 'Ethnographic Enquiries', p.28.
52. 'List of Correspondents', GB, Financial (Miscellaneous) Progs., March 1887, pp.145-147.
53. Circular No. D, from H.H. Risley, July 1886, GI, Financial (Miscellaneous) Progs., March 1887, p.105.
54. 'On the Application of Dr. Topinard's Anthropometric System to the Tribes and Castes of Bengal', by H.H. Risley, 8 March 1886, (hereafter 'Application of Anthropometric System'), GB, Financial (Miscellaneous) Progs., March 1887, pp. 83-85.
55. 'Ethnographic Enquiries', p.28.
56. *Ibid.*
57. H.H. Risley, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p. vii. Emphasis added.
58. 'Ethnographic Enquiries', p. 30.
59. *Ibid*, p.31.
60. H.H. Risley, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.ix.
61. Resolution, GB, Financial Dept., 30 April 1885, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous) Progs., March 1887, p.36.
62. 'Ethnographic Enquiries', p.31.
63. 'Application of Anthropometric System', p.85.
64. Max Muller to H.H. Risley, 20 July 1886, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), March 1887, Colln. 1-33.34.
65. Memo by H.H. Risely, No. 656, 5 October 1886, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), March 1887, Colln. 1-32.

66. 'Application of Anthropometric System', p.85. Emphasis added.
67. For a more detailed discussion on Risley's survey, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'The Raj, Risley and The Tribes and Castes of Bengal', *India Past and Present*, Vol.II, No. 1, 1985.
68. Bernard S.Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', *op.cit.*, p. 284.
69. Colman Macaulay, Secy., GB, to Secy. GI, Home, 21 September 1887, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), October 1887, Colln. 1-13.
70. H.H. Risley to Secy., GB, Financial, 12 December 1890, GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), File No. M3-C/2-1, February 1891.
71. 'Instructions to Enumerators', GB, Financial (Miscellaneous), File No. M3-C/16-1, May 1890.
72. Extract from Progs. of GI, Home (Public), 26 April 1893, GB, General (Miscellaneous), July 1893, Prog. No. 1.
73. H.J.McIntosh, Under Secy., GB, General, to H.H. Risley, 12 June 1893, GB, General (Miscellaneous), July 1893, Prog. No. 2.
74. Extract from Progs. of GI, Home (Public), No. 3219-32, 23 May 1901; also, copy of the letter from Sir Michael Forster (on behalf of) British Association for the Advancement of Science, December 1899, Enclosure No. 1 to the letter from Lord George Francis Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, to the Governor-General of India in Council, No. 5 (Revenue), 18 January 1900, Risley Collection, (Microfilm), Reel No. 1.
75. Extract from Progs. of GI, Home (Public), No. 3219-32, 23 May 1901, Risley Collection, (Microfilm), Reel No. 1.
76. H.H. Risley, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.vii
77. *India Census*, 1901, pp. 537-538, quoted in G.S.Ghurye, *op.cit.*, p. 192. Emphasis added.
78. Extract from Progs. of GI, Home (Public), No. 3219-32, 23 May 1901, Risley Collection, (Microfilm), Reel No. 1.
79. Circular No. 1, from E.A. Gait, Superintendent of Ethnography, Bengal, to all District Officers & L.C. Es., 1 December 1902, Risley Collection, (Microfilm), Reel No. 1.

80. GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 5-G/2, May 1916, Progs. Nos. 1-6, K.W., pp. 3-5.
81. Circular No. 14, GB, General, (Miscellaneous), 24 September 1915, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 5-G/2, May 1916, Prog. No. 3.
82. J.G.Cumming, Secy., GB, General, to Secy., GI, Education, 18 March 1911, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10-C/30-2, March 1911, Progs. Nos.29-31.
83. 'Annual Report on Indian papers published in the Bengal Presidency during the year 1910', (Calcutta, 1911), p.36; GI,Home (Political), B July 1911, Prog. No. 120.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Surendranath Banerjee, Secy., Indian Association, to Secy., GI, Education, 3 March 1911,GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10-C/30-2, March 1911, Progs. Nos.29-31.
86. 'Report on the Native-owned English and Vernacular Newspapers of East Bengal and Assam for the year 1911', GI, Home (Political), B June 1912, Prog.No.74; J.G.Cumming, Secy., GB, General to the Hony.Secy., Indian Association, 10 April 1911, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 10-C/30, July 1911, Progs. Nos.6-7.
87. L.S.S. O'Malley, Census Superintendent, Bengal, to Secy., GB, General, 26 June 1911, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 10C-40, July 1911, Progs. Nos.249-250.
88. 'Terms of Relationship', by E.A Gait, Census Commissioner for India, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 10C-40, July 1910, Progs. Nos.230-235.
89. Circular No. 11 from L.S.S. O'Malley, Supdt. of Census Operations, Bengal, to the Magistrate (s)/Deputy Commissioner (s), 27 June 1910, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 10C-40, B July 1910, Progs. Nos. 230-235.
90. L.S.S. O'Malley, Secy., GB, General, to Secy., GI, Home, 2 January 1917, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos. 14-17.
91. GB,General (Education), File No. 1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., pp.11-12.
92. Resolution by—The Government of Bengal, Appointment (Reforms) Department, No.122 A.R., 16 January 1933,GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61.

93. Bernard S.Cohn, 'History and Anthropology: The State of Play', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.22, No.2, April 1980, p.202.
94. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Indian Caste Customs*, (Reprint, Calcutta 1976), pp.4-5.

## 2

# Caste and Protective Discrimination

### I

Between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries, British Orientalists, civilian ethnographers and census superintendents had managed to establish and regularize what Bernard Cohn has called 'a discourse of differentiation'.<sup>1</sup> Hindu society, as we have seen, was stereotyped as a permanently stratified one with a central dichotomy between the privileged higher castes at the one end and the depressed lower castes and the untouchables at the other, reflecting the age-old imbalances in the distribution of socio-economic opportunities. All these social groups were then carefully ordained, quantified and mapped for ready administrative reference and easy comprehension by the alien rulers, unaccustomed to this unique and therefore exotic social system.

As a result, this stereotype gradually began to influence colonial policy planning in Bengal, particularly when the high caste Hindu *bhadralok* began to question the legitimacy of the Raj at the turn of the century. In order to contain the intensifying anti-imperialist agitation, the British first tried to rally the Muslims, and then with equal consistency, sought to mobilize the Hindu 'depressed classes' in support of their rule. And this they did by evolving a policy of 'protective discrimination', that sought to grant special favour in matters of education, employment and constitutional rights, first to the Muslims and then to the 'depressed classes', later called the 'Scheduled Castes'. The Bengal Government at the beginning was a bit hesitant to carry on the policy with regard to the Scheduled Castes, primarily because of its preoccupation with the Muslims who were politically more important in this province. But eventually the Government of India,

which was looking at the situation from an all-India perspective, persuaded it to adopt such a policy. Thus Bengal, along with the rest of the country, moved towards a corporate pluralist society, where ethnic or caste status of individuals was taken into consideration for distributing official patronage. The policy was partly to redress the existing social imbalances, and partly to draw the attention of the larger Hindu community away from the growing nationalist movement. For such a policy would further encourage structural pluralism, which could then be taken advantage of to popularize India's colonial connection.

The situation suggests that the impact of British rule on the structure of Indian society was deeper than has been allowed by some historians, who argue that traditional social forces were not substantially altered by the colonial impact. Of course, caste existed before and the British did not create it. Nor could ever the lower castes of Bengal, particularly the untouchables, fully identify themselves, socially or culturally, with the high caste Hindus. But what was essentially a social and cultural dichotomy, was now given a definite political shape. A conflict of socio-cultural identity was transformed into a conflict of interests. The civilian ethnographic perception of a system of ritualised ethnic division of an antagonistic character thus became a reality—largely as a result of British appointment policies, constitutional and electoral arrangements, political and administrative innovations. The impact of the official policy was thus deeper and more fundamental than we sometimes admit. But before we look into this impact, it is essential to find out how this policy of protective discrimination took shape during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

## II

The first direct colonial initiative to develop a separate identity among the 'depressed classes' had come on the eve of the census of 1911, when the Commissioner circulated an instruction to enumerate them separately from the other Hindus. In view of the vehement nationalist protest, as we have already seen, the attempt had to be ultimately abandoned. And the Education Member, Butler, declared in the Imperial Legislative Council on 3 January 1911, that the opinion expressed by the Census Commissioner reflected his personal views and that the government did not identify itself with them.<sup>2</sup> Such attempts at classification of Hindu society were the results of a continuing shift in

the colonial policy towards protective discrimination in favour of certain social groups, whose loyalty had to be ensured in order to balance off the influence of the nationalists. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the nationalist movement had become identified with a section of the higher castes of Bengal, if not in reality, at any rate in the perception of the Raj. The partition of the province in 1905 was designed, among other things, to strike at the root of the power of these high caste Bengali *bhadralok*. And accordingly, the new administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, through its education and employment policies, sought to destroy what Richard Cronin has called the "class rule" by the Hindu landowning, money lending, professional and clerical classes, mainly belonging to the three highest Bengali castes, the Brahmans, the Kayasthas and the Baidyas. The draft Resolution which Sir Lancelot Hare, the second Lieutenant-Governor of the new province submitted to Lord Minto on 31 October 1906, emphasized "the frequent exclusion in many offices of all but a few castes of Hindus" which had "sometimes gone so far as to make of some offices almost a family gathering." The other communities, particularly the Muslims, did not get their dues as a result, and their interests had to be protected. Minto approved of the Resolution, when Risley, the Home Secretary, strongly supported it.<sup>2</sup> after, protective discrimination in favour of the Muslims became a regular feature of British policy. And the Muslims in return became the strongest supporters of the Raj in Bengal, except during the short interregnum of the Khilafat movement.

Parallel to this, the colonial government was also gradually moving towards a similar policy in relation to some of the lower caste Hindus, who were also backward in comparison with the high caste *bhadralok*, and therefore, could be used to weaken the nationalist movement. The area where the government first concentrated its attention was of course education. For it was education alone which could elevate the status of these people and would enable them to compete with the *bhadralok*. Accordingly, in the early years of the twentieth century, the government committed itself to what Nilratan Sarkar described in 1913 as "a policy of affording special facilities in matters of education to comparatively non-progressive sections."<sup>4</sup>

Hitherto, education of the lower caste people had been left to the endeavours of Christian missionaries. The government provided only a handful of special scholarships for a loose category of people known as the "backward classes", covering disparate social group.<sup>5</sup> The



scholarships, as Kuchler, the Director of Public Instruction, admitted in 1913, were not expressly given for the 'depressed classes', but for a much wider range of boys. But they were open to the 'depressed classes' as well. Had there been more funds, as he acknowledged, "a great deal more" would have been done in this direction.<sup>6</sup>

In this connection, however, the Director of Public Instruction announced in the Bengal Legislative Council, that "Government has long been alive to the necessity of making some provision for the education of what are called the depressed classes... (or) the classes that belong to the very lowest classes of the Hindu social system, or are outside the pale of caste altogether". The main problem regarding their education was not merely poverty, for poverty was not peculiar to them alone. It was rather a problem of "social ostracism" and their "general indifference to education."<sup>7</sup> And to solve these, the government had taken some special measures as well.

In Bengal, so far as primary education was concerned, the boys of the 'depressed classes' did not face any difficulty in the matter of admission. Moreover, to attract pupils of these classes, the government either admitted them free or gave a capitation grant to the individual *guru mahasays*. And at the same time, in localities where these classes happened to be settled in large numbers, the government opened special schools.<sup>8</sup> In 1912-13, the Government of India sanctioned a recurring grant of Rs 9,42,000 for elementary education in Bengal. This grant had to be spent largely on the extension of free elementary education for those who could not afford to pay fees, "the poorer and more backward sections of the population". Moreover, the Government of India had also provided a non-recurring grant of Rs 3,65,000 out of which a sum of Rs 30,000 was spent on schools in backward areas.<sup>9</sup> These schools either charged no fees, or fees far lower than those paid in ordinary schools. As a result of all these measures, as Samman, the next Director of Public Instruction announced in the Bengal Legislative Council on 28 February 1914, one-third of the boys attending primary schools in eastern Bengal and one-tenth in western Bengal "were reading practically free".<sup>10</sup> A large section of these recipients of government patronage definitely belonged to the 'depressed classes'.

So far as high school education is concerned, there were 39 government high schools in Bengal around the year 1913.<sup>11</sup> And there was no rule barring admission of pupils whether on grounds of nationality, sect or caste. But however careful the government might have

been about observing absolute neutrality in matters of admission, there were, as an official admitted, cases of indirect or concealed discrimination. For, "all over the world Head Masters prefer(red) boys of a good class to 'outsiders'".<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the government did whatever they could, at the given situation, to improve education of these boys. Schools situated in the backward areas were given larger aid.<sup>13</sup> In 1915, certain classes of lower primary, upper primary, middle vernacular, middle English, junior and senior scholarships were reserved for the 'backward classes'. Under the revised rules, one graduate scholarship tenable at Dacca College was reserved for either a Muslim or a member of a 'backward class'. Apart from this, there were two college scholarships, two junior scholarships, six school scholarships, six upper primary scholarships and fourteen lower primary scholarships, all distributed in three eastern Bengal divisions, Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi, reserved for the boys of the 'backward classes'. There were also five engineering scholarships tenable at Dacca College of Engineering, reserved for the Muslims and members of the 'backward classes'.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the government expenditure on "education of the backward classes" also leaped enormously during these years—from Rs 19,732 in 1914-15 to Rs 36,929 in 1915-16. And this amount was over and above the cost of reserved scholarships.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, the number of "pupils of aboriginal descent or drawn from depressed classes" was increasing gradually.<sup>16</sup> But still the great difficulty which the students of these communities had to experience was in the matter of hostel accommodation. The problem of untouchability and segregation was there as before and hence separate hostels had to be provided for these students. The government also came forward in this field and established or aided a number of special hostels for these boys, especially in eastern Bengal during 1913-14. For the Namasudras, hostels were opened at Jhalakati, Pirojpur and Barisal in Bakarganj district, at Orakandi in Faridpur district, in Dacca for boys reading in Dacca College and in Rajshahi for those studying in Rajshahi College. Apart from these, there were hostels for the Jogis in Chittagong and Comilla, for the Rajbansis at Rangpur and for the Mahishyas in Dacca. Other proposals were also under consideration. All these hostels were either fully financed or partly subsidised by the government and the boarders were charged either no fee, or only nominal fees. There was also a demand for such a hostel in Calcutta. But the government hoped that the Calcutta problem would be taken

care of by Calcutta University which had already been administering its own mess scheme.<sup>17</sup>

The attention of the Bengal government was, however, more closely drawn to the question of the 'depressed classes' in 1916. In March that year, M.B. Dadabhoy moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council, recommending that measures should be devised for the amelioration of the moral, material and educational conditions of the 'depressed classes'. Although the resolution was ultimately withdrawn, the Government of India on this occasion wanted to consult the local governments about this important issue. The latter were asked to provide information regarding the actual castes and tribes that could be grouped under this category and their numbers, the nature of disabilities that existed, the measures that had already been taken for their moral and material improvement, and what more could be done in future.<sup>18</sup>

To the Bengal government the most baffling question seemed to be one related to the definition of the 'depressed classes'. For, as an official frankly confessed: "we have not found any authoritative definition of the expression". It was not certainly synonymous with the expression "Backward Classes", which was much more comprehensive. In England, material condition furnished the main criterion of judging the depressed status, while the Government of India adopted other criteria, such as social degradation, educational backwardness, aboriginal descent and hereditary criminal propensities. And accordingly, they adopted the classification of the Bombay government which stipulated that 'depressed classes' should include three social and ethnic groups : (i) the untouchables, (ii) the aboriginal and hill tribes, and (iii) the criminal tribes. The Bengal government accepted the definition although this classification was not regarded "suitable to Bengal, where many of the classes referred to cannot be called depressed except as regards social ostracism." Moreover, the Government of India did not state definitely what they meant by the untouchables. As the census enquiries of 1911 had revealed, their position in the Hindu society of Bengal depended on a number of finer distinctions of social behaviour. For the present purpose, however, the Bengal government decided to ignore these niceties and classified only those who caused pollution by touch or presence within a certain distance. The census of 1911 had provided ample information about such groups which contributed more than one per mille of the general population of Bengal. And on that basis, a list was prepared and sent to

the Government of India.<sup>19</sup> A task which could not be fulfilled in 1911 due to public protest was now secretly accomplished.

The list of 1917, as we have already noted, included thirty-one social groups. But as O'Malley, who prepared the list, had himself admitted, it was full of anomalies which could not be avoided in the absence of any concrete and objective criterion. The Jogis and the Rajbansis, for example, were not covered by the definition of the 'depressed classes' and therefore, could not be included in the list, although the Education department considered them as 'backward classes'. On the other hand, many of the groups included in the list were "now at a fairly satisfactory level of education." Thus preparation of such a list, as O'Malley apprehended, tended "to stereotype a state of affairs" which was gradually changing and in no time would have little relevance to reality.<sup>20</sup>

In Bengal, as the government reported, the social structure was "not so rigid and inflexible as elsewhere." And whatever the existing disability, the government preferred to rely on "the good sense of the community" for their "gradual disappearance". So far as positive action was concerned, it had been "their consistent policy to extend and improve education among the depressed classes". A number of steps had also been taken in this direction, and if the government could not do more, it was only because of "want of funds". The government of Bengal, however, thought, at least at this stage, "that the material betterment of these classes must depend on the general progress of the province, and that there is no particular reason why government should intervene to give special facilities to individual classes". The problem of the 'depressed classes' till now was not perhaps up in the priority list of the Bengal government. The more "urgent problem of Bengal" they thought, was "to bring the Muhammadans into a state of educational equality with the Hindus". Together with this there had also been the burden of other reforms of a more general character. And these two programmes were regarded "for some time to come (to) be the first care of Government". Before accomplishing these, it seemed to be undesirable to take up any other large or expensive scheme.<sup>21</sup> However, it was also from this period onward that the government of Bengal began to rearrange their priorities and gradually shifted towards a deeper commitment to a policy of positive action for ameliorating the condition of the 'depressed classes' and the Muslims. Initially though, they relied on the non-government agencies, as far as possible.

The enquiry in 1916 had revealed that a number of non-government voluntary organisations had been working among the 'depressed classes'.<sup>22</sup> And they did commendable work without any government assistance, although in 1915-16 the government had given Rs. 12,000 to the Christian missionaries for the spread of education among backward classes.<sup>23</sup> The most notable of these organisations was certainly the Bengal Depressed Classes Mission, which had recently changed its name to Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes. The Society had already spread its network far and wide—it had been running schools in about seven districts of eastern Bengal.<sup>24</sup> And as the government realised, it was doing "pioneer work in a direction which had not hitherto received adequate attention from either local bodies or inspecting officers". Hence its enthusiasm had to be recognised and patronized in order to derive some benefit from its work. In 1918, the Secretary of the Society applied for a recurring grant of Rs. 5,000<sup>25</sup> which was sanctioned in October that year. But the Society was not any more allowed to function independently. The conditions that were imposed on it, along with the grant, subjected it to close government inspection and virtually made it a government agency.<sup>26</sup>

In May 1918, the attention of the government was also drawn to the necessity of establishing special hostels for the students of the 'depressed classes' residing in Calcutta—a problem which did not seem to be that urgent four years ago. Now, as "an experimental measure", the government decided to start two special messes in Calcutta, one for the Jogis and the other for the Namasudras, each under a resident superintendent. But the responsibility had to be undertaken by Calcutta University, which was to be provided with a special grant of Rs 3,000 per annum for this purpose.<sup>27</sup> The messes were started in July in two rented houses and in view of the poverty of the majority of the boarders they were charged only nominal seat rents.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from this, various trust funds were also utilised for opening schools for the 'depressed classes'. One of the objects of the Newson Trust was to establish primary schools for the 'depressed classes' in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. Out of this fund, in December 1919 it was decided to establish three schools, two for boys and one for girls, in the Diamond Harbour sub-division of the 24-Parganas.<sup>29</sup> In April next year, another school was opened in the same district out of the Sussex Trust.<sup>30</sup> By far the most important measure adopted in this direction was the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919, which

provided for both voluntary and compulsory education. However, its basic principle was that compulsory education would be introduced at a later stage, after proper arrangements had been made for primary education on a voluntary basis. Moreover, it was applicable to the municipalities alone and only subsequently might it be extended to selected unions.<sup>31</sup> The Act, therefore, failed to benefit the 'depressed classes' immediately, as most of them lived in rural areas and were traditionally less enthusiastic about education.

### III

A more important question around this time was that of representation of the 'depressed classes' in the legislature. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 had accepted the principle of special electorates to protect the interests of particular communities. And this brought the question of the lower castes from the realm of philanthropy to the arena of politics, particularly because the nationalists at this time were demanding a higher degree of self-government and the British were opposing such demands by citing "the necessity for protecting minorities".<sup>32</sup> However, the constitutional reforms were being talked about, and in such talks the 'depressed classes' figured prominently. The Franchise (Southborough) Committee recommended for Bengal nomination of one representative of the 'depressed classes' who would put up their views before the Council.<sup>33</sup> But the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee, appointed to consider the Government of India Bill of 1919, observed that "the representation proposed for the depressed classes is inadequate". For, this definition covered "a large proportion of the whole population of India." They, therefore, recommended for such classes "a larger share of representation by nomination, regard being had to the numbers of depressed classes in each province...." This representation should, if necessary, be in addition to, but not at the cost of, the general electorate.<sup>34</sup> The report on Indian Constitutional Reforms spelled out this policy in more categorical terms: "we intend to make the best arrangements that we can for their representation in order that they too may ultimately learn the lesson of self-protection. But if it is found that their interests suffer, and they do not share in the general progress, we must retain the means in our hands of helping them."<sup>35</sup>

The Government of Bengal was also alive to the problem of the 'depressed classes', although this problem was not as acute in Bengal

as elsewhere, as the Chief Secretary, Kerr, observed in his evidence before the Franchise Committee. And therefore he suggested that if necessary, they could be represented by nomination.<sup>36</sup> In October 1918, the Government of Bengal noted that under any ordinary electoral scheme, "it is more than likely that the higher castes, and the legal profession will continue to prevail" and hence the backward castes required "special consideration". In the franchise proposal submitted in December 1918, they suggested that the Governor should have the power to nominate four non-official members from these classes, whose services would be useful in the Council but who would be unlikely to stand for election in any electorate that may be set up.<sup>37</sup> The Government of India also preferred to provide four seats for the 'depressed classes' because a single member would be "rather lonely in the Council and would not be able to do much for his community".<sup>38</sup> But the Bengal Government subsequently revised their position and considered it "unnecessary to earmark four seats for depressed classes". They did not want to allot nominated seats to specified interests before the elections. Increase in the total council membership was out of question, for that would "upset carefully calculated proportions and lead to fresh difficulties."<sup>39</sup>

The Government of India Act of 1919 formally recognised the "special needs" of the 'depressed classes' by including a representative from these classes among the fourteen nominated non-official members in the Central Legislative Assembly. In the provincial legislatures, they were represented by four nominees in the Central Provinces, two each in the Bombay and Bihar and one each in Bengal and the United Provinces. But the Government of India was not very happy with just one nominated member in Bengal which contained a large untouchable population. Hence in January 1920 they suggested the reservation of one or two more nominated seats for them, if the Government of Bengal so desired.<sup>40</sup> But the latter apprehended difficulties in going by population ratio alone. First of all, they were not certain as to "what castes would come within the definition of depressed classes". The enumeration of 1917 showed a population of 7 million for such classes, out of a total 45 million population in the province. And therefore, population ratio would entitle them to about one-seventh of the seats in the Council, i.e., 15, which was a far larger number than proposed by the Government of India and was "practically out of question in view of their relative importance". Moreover, the enumeration itself was not final or beyond doubt.<sup>41</sup> The next important

reference to their number was to be found in the Seventh Quinquennial Review on the progress of education in India for 1912-1917, in which an estimated number of the 'depressed classes' was given by Sir Henry Sharp, Education Commissioner for India. He included the same castes as O'Malley's report did in 1917, but the population figure he arrived at was 6.7 million. And then the Franchise Committee Report estimated the untouchable population figure for Bengal at 9.9 million.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, of the untouchables, only the Namasudras were articulate in demanding such special representation and suitable non-officials could perhaps be found to represent them; but the Government doubted whether such non-official representatives could be found for the other castes. And given the numerical strength of the Namasudras and that of the Mahishyas too, these two castes were also expected to win some seats in the general constituencies as well.<sup>43</sup> Hence, under such confusing circumstances, the government of Bengal decided that one nominated seat proposed by the Franchise Committee was sufficient.<sup>44</sup>

But the issue was once again raised in 1925, in view of the report of the Reforms Enquiry (Muddiman) Committee of 1924. The Committee refused to sanction any general widening of the franchise on the ground of lack of practical training of the electorate. But it was unanimous in its opinion that further representation of the 'depressed classes' was required. The Government of India wanted to know the opinion of the Bengal Government and invited its views on whether suitable methods could be formulated for the representation of these classes by election.<sup>45</sup> But the latter was not in favour of such an extension. The main difficulty they pointed out, was "about the framing of a suitable franchise", and a "suitable electorate", for there were as yet "no data as to the number of electors from these classes". The government was still not sure "as to who are to be included" in the list of 'depressed classes'. The Calcutta University Commission in 1919 had prepared a list of such castes which were educationally depressed. But the list did not include certain other castes, such as the Mahishyas, Rajbansis, Kapalis or Jogis, many of whom might not have been educationally backward, but in other respects deserved and demanded special protection.<sup>46</sup> The Census of 1921 made a fresh estimate of the population of such classes and took into account many castes which were not so classified previously, such as the Mahishya, Rajbansi, Jalia Kaibartta, Kalu, Khandait, Kurmi, etc. But even then, the list did not include either the Kapalis or the Jogis, the Sundis or the



Dhobas, and the Dosadhs who were classed as depressed in 1917. Although it was acknowledged that it was not easy to define 'depressed classes', the confusion came to a head when the Census Commissioner for India did not accept the classification made by the Census Superintendent for Bengal. And this was evident from the fact that while the latter's estimate of the number of 'depressed classes' in Bengal was about 11½ million, the former's was only 9 million.<sup>47</sup>

Under the existing confusion, therefore, it was really difficult to form a separate electorate for certain widely scattered listed castes, setting them apart from the other unlisted castes situated in similar conditions and above all, denying the same privilege to the Muslims who would certainly resent such an arrangement. Hence Bengal Government was in favour of nomination, if additional representation was at all to be provided for. But such additional representation was considered to be both unnecessary, because these classes were not socially oppressed in Bengal, and politically inexpedient, because a few more additional nominated representatives would upset the balance between rural and urban representation and would involve communal difficulties. In these circumstances, "the real requirement", the government thought, "is increased representation not of the depressed classes.... but of the poorer classes of the population.... The solution of the problem lies in lowering the franchise so as to give these classes more weight in the general constituencies."<sup>48</sup>

Another important issue which was also being raised around this time was the representation of the 'depressed classes' in government services. In February 1907, the Government of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in a Resolution on the employment of Muslims had also referred to the necessity of recruiting members of important Hindu castes other than those usually employed in government offices. But no definite policy in this direction was formulated at that time.<sup>49</sup> And in 1913, the Government of India declared in the Imperial Legislative Council that "any reservation of such work for them to the exclusion of others is scarcely practicable".<sup>50</sup>

But gradually the government began to shift from this position and an enquiry in 1919 revealed that many departments under the Government of Bengal were already giving "special facilities" to the members of the 'depressed classes' in matters of appointment, although there was not yet any such reservation policy formally declared by the government.<sup>51</sup> In September 1920, the Government of India by way of giving effect to the proposal of the Public Services Com-

mission instructed the Bengal Government to introduce competition, if found feasible, for recruitment to the Provincial Civil Services. However, in doing so, "due regard....(was) to be paid to the need for representing in the services different classes and sections of the community".<sup>52</sup> The Bengal Government had already accepted competition as feasible, but this competition was to be restricted among candidates nominated by college authorities. So far as communal representation was concerned, it was decided to earmark one-third of the appointments for the Muslims. But for the 'depressed classes', such reservation was not considered to be 'safe', owing to the dearth of qualified candidates. They would be ensured an opportunity to compete and then be left to their own efforts and ability to secure an appointment.<sup>53</sup>

But the government moved from this position subsequently. The first Notification that came out in 1922, instructed the heads of colleges and the Director of Public Instruction to nominate candidates for the examination, with due regard being paid to the desirability of representing different classes and communities. The Selection Committee, which included a representative of the 'depressed classes', was asked to select candidates for examination from among these nominations. The selection had to be "so made that not less than one-third of the candidates shall be Muhammadans, and not less than one-sixth shall be either Anglo-Indians or members of the depressed classes".<sup>54</sup> As regards appointments, nothing was explicitly said, but it was informally accepted that the same proportions would be followed in making the appointments as well.<sup>55</sup>

The results of the first examination, however, revealed the difficulties of accommodating communal representation within the competitive system. The existing rules were criticised for not providing adequate safeguards for the representation of the 'depressed classes'. Grouped as they were with the Anglo Indians, the 'depressed classes' could not compete with them on equal terms, as Bhishmadeb Das, their representative in the first Selection Committee, pointed out. Moreover, the members of the Selection Committee disagreed as to the classes which should come under this category. And even when this elusive problem was settled, as in this case the Calcutta University Commission list was later accepted, this raised new problems. It was impossible to reserve appointments for them according to a strict numerical ratio, as higher education was still very limited among them. Nevertheless, some "special facilities" had to be given to them

as well, if a reservation policy was to be continued for the Muslims. And the government was also committed to this principle, as they had recently accepted a Council resolution which proposed to secure a proportion of the appointments to the 'depressed classes'.<sup>56</sup> The problem, therefore, was how to achieve it in a proper way.

There were several alternative solutions, but each involved a number of political and administrative difficulties. To accept the right of every caste and community to a proportion of public appointments on the basis of their numerical strength, as was done in relation to the Muslims, would lead to "a perfectly impossible position". And that idea was also considered to be "separatist in tendency and opposed to the spirit of competition", although it had to be followed in the case of the Muslims for "historical and other good reasons". The other alternative was to scrap the reservation system altogether. But in "the present state of education", that "would lead to all the appointments being absorbed by one class of the community which would not be to the interest of the state". At the same time, to reserve certain proportions of appointments for the 'depressed classes' as a whole, would have the undesirable effect of stimulating "competition for eligibility to this title", and given the "individual differences in advancement", one group might go ahead of the others and "get all the appointments reserved for the rest". Hence the only way out of this impasse was "for government to nominate".<sup>57</sup> The Notification of 1923, therefore, explicitly stated that the "Government reserve the right to nominate any qualified candidate" belonging to "the backward classes as enumerated.... (in) the University Commission's Report".<sup>58</sup> And in doing so, even "the question of a minimum qualifying standard for appointment" could as well be ignored.<sup>59</sup>

When all these constitutional and executive measures were being taken, education of the 'depressed classes' was not being neglected either. Following a resolution in the Council, proposed by Syed Emdadul Huq in March 1922, the Bengal Government had provided for a budgetary allocation of Rs 20,000 for the improvement of education among the backward classes. Out of it 103 new scholarships, ranging from upper primary to graduate levels, were instituted for students of these classes. A Namasudra hostel was started at Faridpur and additional grants were sanctioned to the Baptist Zenana Mission and the Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes.<sup>60</sup> The latter Society from 1923 onwards, received an annual grant of Rs 6,250 from the government and since 1922 all the government funds allocated

for the schools of the 'depressed classes' were disbursed through them.<sup>61</sup> The number of schools under their control and the number of pupils instructed there had also increased phenomenally between 1918-19 and 1924-25. As there was a fall in private subscriptions for the Society, in March 1927 the D.P.I. recommended for it an additional annual grant of Rs 3000 for a period of five years.<sup>62</sup> Finally around August 1927, following a Council resolution, the Government began to think of launching a massive primary education programme for students of the 'depressed classes', involving a budgetary allocation of Rs 3 lakhs.<sup>63</sup>

#### IV

The question of the 'depressed classes' acquired additional importance in the middle of 1928, when the Government of India, under the suggestion of M.S. Ingram of the Church Missionary Society in the United Provinces, proposed the appointment of a Special Officer in Bengal to look after the interests of the 'depressed classes'. The proposal had originally come in 1926, but at that time the Bengal Government did not consider it necessary at all.<sup>64</sup> But now after two years, when the question was raised again, many in the government thought that such a step was urgently called for, in order to ameliorate the condition of the 'depressed classes'. There was already a special Muhammadan officer to look after the interests of the Muslim community in the province. So far as the 'depressed classes' were concerned, the condition in Bengal, it was acknowledged, was "altogether different from that of Madras". Yet, the enquiries undertaken on the occasion of the visit of the Simon Commission revealed that more than half of the Hindu population in Bengal belonged to the 'depressed classes'. Furthermore, leaders of such classes were constantly agitating against the government, alleging lack of sympathy for their grievances. And therefore, there was the constant hazard that they might "believe in whatever is mentioned to them by the Congress people". Under the circumstances, the Governor-in-Council decided in September 1928, that an "officer will be placed on special duty to investigate the desirability of appointing a special officer to look after the interests of the depressed classes in Bengal". W.S. Hopkyns was given this assignment and he was supposed to begin his enquiry after the departure of the Simon Commission.<sup>65</sup>

Hopkyns conducted a detailed and elaborate enquiry which was

completed in May 1929. The 'depressed classes' were "defined as including the 'untouchables', meaning those who defiled others by their presence or their touch, and also those who, owing to their ignorance and backwardness, are liable to be exploited or otherwise ill-treated by other classes among whom they live". Accepting the 1921 census figures, their number was enumerated at something over 11,200,000. His report, however, concluded that generally speaking, the backwardness of the 'depressed classes' was now "more due to poverty and ignorance than to the disabilities of caste"; and hence, a special officer was not required. Their primary need was education and funds to provide it. The Rural Primary Education Bill, then being considered, would be of great value to these backward classes, if passed into law. But failing that, certain remedies, as advised by the Director of Public Instruction, might be applied and these included extension of free-studentships, creation of additional reserved scholarships and special allotments for giving adequate grants to schools attended by the pupils of the 'depressed classes'. Finally, grants to Missions and Societies, such as the Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes, which were already doing good work, had to be enhanced.<sup>66</sup>

The Government, acting upon the recommendations of Hopkyns, resolved in November 1929 that the appointment of a Special Officer to look after the general interests of the 'depressed classes' in Bengal "is not necessary". But at the same time they accepted "the principle of doing everything possible for the improvement of the depressed classes" and the different departments were asked to submit definite schemes to this effect.<sup>67</sup> A detailed programme, had already been prepared by Sir P.C. Mitter, a member of the Executive Council, then in charge of education. These 'depressed classes', he argued, were "a special charge" of the Governor, as the existing royal instructions required him to make "due provision for the advancement and social welfare of these classes.... (who) specially rely upon our protection and cannot as yet fully rely for their welfare upon joint political action...." His recommendations included first of all the Primary Education Bill, and apart from that, additional scholarships, preferably at the lower level of education and in the technical and medical institutions, but not at the higher stages of conventional education, for that would only increase the number of unemployed disgruntled *bhadra-lok*. Secondly, provision had to be made for at least Rs 50,000 annually for encouragement of the existing and the new societies which would run schools for the 'depressed classes'. In addition to this, at

least 10 per cent of the ministerial appointments in certain districts where these classes were mainly concentrated, had to be reserved for them, along with some special facilities for deserving youngmen of these classes to enter higher services. For the improvement of the material condition of these classes, he suggested special organisation of their caste occupations through co-operatives and the employment of an officer of the co-operative department for this purpose. And finally, to implement all these programmes he recommended the allocation of at least Rs 1,25,000 by the government.<sup>68</sup>

Many of the recommendations made by Hopkyns and Mitter were later implemented by the government. The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill was passed by the Provincial Legislative Council in August 1930. Around the same time, the Director of Public Instruction started an investigation to formulate a definite scheme for the extension of free-studentships, additional scholarships and special allotment for schools attended by the pupils of the 'depressed classes', while the government had already been spending a sum of over one lakh of rupees for such purposes. And in spite of financial stringency, additional grants were asked for the societies working among these people.<sup>69</sup>

So far as higher provincial services were concerned, nomination from among such candidates had already been provided for and a widening of its coverage by including new castes into the list was also being considered.<sup>70</sup> Most of the district officers in 1930 preferred an extension of such special facilities to the Mahishyas and the Rajbansis, who were not included in the Calcutta University Commission list, but who were not as yet in a position to compete on equal terms with the high caste Hindu and the Muslim candidates. It was decided, therefore, that the census list of 1921 and that of the Calcutta University Commission would be amalgamated to have a fairly exhaustive list of castes who should legitimately belong to this category. In the new list that was issued, the Namasudras, Mahishyas and Rajbansis were bracketed as 'Minority Communities' along with the Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and Buddhists, and the other groups were included as 'Backward Classes'. The list was not final, as other groups at any time could apply for inclusion. A separate competitive examination was proposed for them; but even then, if adequate number of candidates failed to qualify, the government could nominate to not more than 10 per cent of the existing vacancies. The government also reserved the right to nominate candidates from these classes to the

upper Medical Service, but in this case no percentage was fixed.<sup>71</sup>

In August 1930, the Governor-in-Council proposed to extend such facilities to ministerial appointments as well. This was found necessary for "the encouragement of education among the backward classes". For this purpose, the list finalised for the Provincial Services was adopted, with the omission of Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians whose educational standards were considered to be higher than those of the other communities in the list.<sup>72</sup> So far as reservation of a certain percentage of appointments was concerned, most of the district officers opposed it on the ground that sufficient number of suitable candidates were not yet forthcoming from these classes. However, in Faridpur and Bakarganj, which had a large concentration of 'depressed classes', it was found that the high caste *bhadralok* who constituted only 13.5 per cent of the population in the former district and 14.5 per cent in the latter, had the possibility of getting 66.6 per cent of the appointments open to the non-Muslims. Hence an experiment in reservation could be had in these two districts.<sup>73</sup> The Memorandum that was issued in April 1931 to this effect, did not prescribe any percentage for all the areas and districts. Only for Faridpur and Bakarganj was it stipulated that "at least 1 out of every 3 non-Muhammadans appointed to ministerial vacancies must belong to the backward classes". In other areas, appointing authorities in the districts were instructed to encourage candidates from these classes. Such candidates "who possess the qualifications required for any such appointment", it was specifically mentioned, "should not be rejected merely because other candidates have reached a higher standard". But such preference would be applicable "only to admission to probation, not to confirmation after probation".<sup>74</sup> Even in spite of this circular, not many candidates from the backward classes were appointed in ministerial jobs during the next two years. This was either due to lack of suitable candidates or because no post was available after meeting the prior claims of other communities, notably Muslims. This did "not necessarily imply", as the Government representative emphasized in the Legislative Council, "that no attempt has been made to follow out the instructions....."<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, by October 1930, the Director of Public Instruction had finalised a scheme for additional free studentships for students belonging to the backward Hindu classes. "It would ... seem desirable", he emphasized, "that these backward classes should also be allowed concession equal to, if not greater than, what are admissible in the case

of Moslem pupils". His suggestion was that the students from these sections of the community "should be allowed special concessions in the shape of free studentships up to an annual limit of 15 per cent of their own enrolment".<sup>76</sup> When the finance department raised the question of the loss of revenue, he argued that it "is not desirable to regard the question only from the point of view of probable loss to Government; there is such a thing as political exigency also."<sup>77</sup> The proposal was ultimately sanctioned in April 1932, and it was to be applicable in Government as well as in Government aided schools.<sup>78</sup>

As the discussion of constitutional reforms started during the time, the question of the 'depressed classes' acquired much more importance. But before we go into that, it will be pertinent here to mention the views of the Bengal Government on a few significant bills introduced in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, as these would reveal the attitude of the government to the whole issue of the status of the 'depressed classes'. These would further show that through all these measures, the government was merely trying to win over the 'depressed classes' and not certainly aiming at a fundamental social revolution. Such proposals there were and they could ultimately have benefited those classes in a much more concrete way.

In December 1932, Raja and Ranga Iyer, two members of the Central Legislative Assembly, tried to introduce the Untouchability Abolition Bill which would outlaw all forms of penalty, disadvantage or disability suffered by members of the untouchable castes. Almost simultaneously, permission was sought for introducing in the Madras Legislative Council two other similar bills, the 'Removal of Depressed Classes' Religious Disabilities Bill and the Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill. Introduction of all these bills required the prior sanction of the Governor-General and for this the Bengal government was asked to communicate its views.<sup>79</sup> The matter was hereafter "carefully considered" by the latter. The two Hindu members, Sir P.C. Mitter and B.P. Singh Roy, thought that the passage of such bills would be deeply resented by a large section of the Hindu community. But "on a strict application of the Principles hitherto applied", it was found "difficult to (justify) refusal of sanction....". However, so far as the Assembly Bills were concerned, it was found that "consideration of expediency" warranted a refusal, provided such refusal could be supported by "adequate reasons". Even if such reasons were not sufficiently impressive, they could be used "for delaying the progress of the Bill...." The other alternative was for the government to



introduce a carefully drafted bill, which would ensure the 'depressed classes' "a position of complete equality before the law...., while leaving all private rights untouched." In that case the initiative would remain in the hands of the government and hence the possibilities of this course needed to be "carefully explored".<sup>80</sup>

Even in spite of a threat from Gandhi to resort to fast, sanction to the Madras bills was refused by the Governor-General on the ground that pilgrims to Madras temples came from all over India and therefore, it was not a provincial issue to be decided in the provincial legislature. The Assembly bill was allowed to be introduced,<sup>81</sup> and it was discussed in the Legislative Assembly in September 1933 and January 1934. Finally on February 1, the motion for circulation of the bill was adopted. But in course of the debate, it was pointed out by the Law Member, that if the 'depressed classes' were removed from the category of outcastes, they must be given a definite status in Hindu society. Consequently, notice was received of two bills, the Hindus' Status Bill and the Depressed Classes Status Bill, both of which required previous sanction of the Governor-General for introduction. The first bill proposed to give the untouchables the status of Brahmans and thus made a fundamental attack on the Hindu religious and social system. The Government of India decided to refuse sanction to this bill, because the introduction of such "a drastic revolutionary measure" in the legislature was considered to be "contrary to public policy". The other one, the Depressed Classes Status Bill, proposed by C.S. Ranga Iyer, provided that the 'depressed classes' should henceforth be regarded as Sudras and be governed by laws applicable to Sudras. It was not considered to be objectionable, but the local governments were asked to assess its possible effect on the Hindu community.<sup>82</sup>

Charu Chandra Ghosh and Bejoy Prasad Singh Roy, the two Hindu members of the Executive Council, thought that "any endeavour to include or exclude persons from the society through legislative enactment would be an infringement on the civil rights of the members of the community". The government should not go for it only "to placate political social reformers", for that would be "highly inexpedient on political grounds".<sup>83</sup> G.P. Hogg, Chief Secretary, however, visualised the possible impact of this bill in an entirely different way and from a different perspective altogether. "I do not think", he noted, that "anything is to be gained by stifling discussion of the proposal... Indeed, it might be preferable politically if the subject were freely discussed...."

For such a discussion would bring to the surface the cleavages within Hindu society and would thus tear it apart. Firstly, the 'depressed classes' and the untouchables would object to their permanent classification as Sudras, for that would check the process of "social climbing". The orthodox section, on the other hand, was likely to be divided on the subject. Some would probably approve of a scheme which would stereotype the Hindu system and put an end to social climbing. Others might resent the inclusion in Hindu society of untouchables or out-castes with whom they preferred to avoid contact. In this way a public discussion would surely split Hindu society into warring groups. But after this was accomplished, the proposal "should (then) be opposed.... unless the depressed classes and untouchables themselves unmistakably welcome the proposal and signify that they are prepared to accept it." <sup>84</sup>

However, in the end, the Bengal Government preferred to be more cautious and decided that "consent should not be given to the introduction of the Bill". For it sought to bring about a fundamental change in the constitution of Hindu society. Permitting the introduction and discussion of the present bill would create a widespread impression that government favoured such a change and it would be impossible to remove it from the minds of the masses who did not understand the niceties of legislative procedure. Furthermore, leaders of the 'depressed classes' themselves were likely to object to such a measure which might obstruct the process of corporate social mobility.<sup>85</sup> Later, Ranga Iyer withdrew his bill in the face of strong opposition and many orthodox Hindus in Calcutta breathed a sigh of relief.<sup>86</sup>

## V

The Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission had, in the meantime, once again brought to the fore the question of separate representation for the 'depressed classes'. The Commission agreed that in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and the United Provinces the untouchables did "not suffer so severely as in the south". But it would be a "mistake to suppose", they thought, "that the problem does not exist in these provinces". There had been considerable efforts to ameliorate their condition. But the progress had been and was likely to remain slow.<sup>87</sup> Hence these people deserved some special protection in order to secure their legitimate political rights. But the Commission decided against a separate electorate, for this would require a precise definition of all who

were covered by the term, thus stigmatizing each voter in the list and obstructing the rise of such 'depressed' people to a higher status in society. As a solution, the Commission proposed that there should be some reservation of seats. The proportion of such reserved seats to the total number of seats in all the Indian general constituencies should be three-quarters of the proportion of the 'depressed class' population to the total population of the electoral area in the province. And the Governor in consultation with the associations of such people would certify which candidates should be authorised to stand for the 'depressed class' seats.<sup>88</sup> In August 1930, the Government of Bengal accepted in principle the recommendations of the Commission, but did not agree to the proportions suggested by them. Because any decision regarding proportions, it thought, would require a careful examination of the number of people of the 'depressed classes' in areas where they were largely concentrated and an adjustment of their representation to the total representation of these areas.

However, the deliberations at the Round Table Conference had made it further evident that it was generally felt that some provision should be made in the new constitution for better representation of the 'depressed classes' and that the method of representation by nomination was no longer regarded as appropriate. The Minorities Sub-Committee report of the first Round Table Conference showed that the representative of the 'Depressed Classes' had demanded that they should be separated from the Hindu population and be regarded as a distinct community for electoral purposes. But the Government of India was not yet sure about its feasibility. Hence in their Despatch on Constitutional Reforms, the matter was referred to the Indian Franchise Committee, to be headed by Lord Lothian, which would secure for the 'depressed classes' adequate representation by the best practicable means.<sup>89</sup>

In responding to the enquiries by the Indian Franchise Committee, the Bengal government however found difficulties in recommending such a practical means. First of all, they agreed that a general extension of franchise might not secure to the 'depressed classes' representatives of their own choice. It was true that there were 8 (elected) standing members of the Legislative Council (out of 46 Hindu members) who belonged to these groups. But most of them came from two articulate castes, the Namasudras and the Rajbansis (if the Mahishyas were included the number would have been even more). Hence even if a general extension of franchise would bring in more

representatives from these classes, they would belong to these articulate groups and the others would be left behind. Hence, the 'depressed classes', the government realised, "cannot be left without more adequate safeguard in the scramble for power". But it was not prepared to accept the "group system of representation" as contemplated by the Franchise Committee, for it appeared to be "fanciful, complicated and impracticable". Nor was it in favour of creating another separate electorate as desired by the representative of the 'depressed classes' in the Round Table Conference. The principle of reservation of seats was therefore accepted,<sup>90</sup> but this involved a number of difficulties.

First of all, so far as the 'depressed classes' were concerned, there was no precedent for reservation in the province. Hence the number of such reserved seats according to population ratio had to be determined. And for that, it had to be clearly decided what castes should be included within this category. The 1931 Census had classified 82 castes as either 'depressed' or 'backward' with a total population of 7,756,301. The Revenue Department added six other castes to the list with a population of 304,643. The Rajbansis were included, as advised by Hopkyns in 1929, but the Mahishyas were excluded, for they were considered to be "able to look after themselves".<sup>91</sup> The list was forwarded to the Franchise Committee in March 1932, but it was described as a provisional list.<sup>92</sup>

Now the main problem was to determine the number of seats to be reserved for these classes. Some in the government thought that the "rough and ready formula" suggested by the Simon Commission was the most practicable. But others preferred to wait for the recommendations of the Provincial Franchise Committee appointed in January 1932.<sup>93</sup> In its report submitted in March, the Committee made only one important recommendation, i.e., lowering of franchise or giving direct voting right to all paying at least 12 annas as local tax or rate. But Mukunda Behari Mullick, the 'depressed classes' representative in the Committee, in his minute of dissent claimed for the 'depressed classes' at least 35 seats out of a total 200 in Bengal.<sup>94</sup> So far as franchise was concerned, the Indian Franchise Committee recommended "differential franchise" if necessary, to bring the 'depressed classes' electorate up to their population ratio or in any event as near as possible to 10 per cent of their population strength. The Bengal Government accepted the 10 per cent ratio, but hoped that no differential franchise would be necessary to reach it. And the

provisional electoral rolls prepared in July 1933 proved this contention.<sup>95</sup>

The Communal Decision announced in August 1932 put an end to all these contemplations and calculations. Under its provisions, members of the 'depressed classes', eligible for voting, were to vote as usual in the general constituencies. But in view of "the fact that for considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the legislative, a number of special seats will be assigned to them....These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the 'depressed classes' electorally qualified will be entitled to vote". Such voters would, therefore, vote both in a general and special constituency. This proposed arrangement of special constituencies would be terminated after twenty years. But in the meantime they might be abolished with the consent of the classes concerned. The scope of the Decision was, however, confined to the provincial legislatures only. In Bengal, it was acknowledged, a majority of voters in some general constituencies would belong to the 'depressed classes'. Accordingly, pending further investigation, no number was fixed for the members to be returned from the special 'depressed class' constituencies in this province. But it was "intended....that the depressed classes should obtain not less than ten seats in the Bengal Legislature".<sup>96</sup>

The Communal Decision raised a storm in Indian politics as Gandhi, then in confinement in the Yeravda gaol, decided to fast unto death, unless the separate electorate for the 'depressed classes' was revoked. This arrangement, he thought, would signify a permanent split in Hindu society, would perpetuate the stigma of untouchability and would stand in the way of eventual assimilation of the untouchables into the Hindu community.<sup>97</sup> The crisis came to an end with the Poona Agreement, signed in the presence of Gandhi (September 1932) between the representatives of the 'depressed classes' and the caste Hindus. The agreement accepted the principle of reservation of seats for the 'depressed classes' out of the general electorate seats in the provincial legislatures—in Bengal the number of such reserved seats would be 30, instead of 10 awarded in the Communal Decision. But election to these seats should be by joint electorates, subject, however, to a particular procedure. All the members of the 'depressed classes' registered in the general electoral roll of a constituency would form an electoral college. It would elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the 'depressed classes' for each of such reserved seats by the

method of single vote. These four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election were to be the candidates for election by the general electorate. In the central legislature, 18 per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate would be reserved for the 'depressed classes' and the same procedure of election would be followed. The arrangement would continue for ten years, unless terminated before by mutual agreement. Apart from representation in the legislature, the Poona Pact also envisaged that every endeavour should be made to secure a fair representation of the 'depressed classes' in the public services and that in every province an adequate sum should be earmarked for providing educational facilities for the members of these classes.<sup>98</sup>

The agreement appeared to be "reasonable" to His Majesty's Government. Moreover, the condition of Gandhi was then critical.<sup>99</sup> Under the circumstances, the Government of India accepted the Poona Pact without any delay, stating that its full implementation would need further consideration, since many of its provisions lay outside the scope of the Communal Decision which dealt mainly with the question of representation in the provincial legislatures.<sup>100</sup> The Bengal Government had no other option but to accept it; but they did it with reservations. First of all, there was no time to assess the opinion of the classes affected by the agreement. There was no public protest for the time being because of the necessity to save Gandhi's life. But disaffection was likely to grow as caste Hindus had lost 20 more seats. Moreover, none from Bengal was among the signatories of the Pact, except perhaps Birla; but he did not have a general standing in the province. And above all, the Depressed Classes Association of Bengal had already registered its protest against the insufficient number of seats reserved for their members.<sup>101</sup>

The Poona Agreement, however, was regarded as a settled fact and the Government of India Act of 1935 merely embodied its main provisions. It granted six reserved seats in the Central Legislature and thirty in the Bengal Legislative Assembly for the 'depressed classes' who were henceforth to be known as 'Scheduled Castes'. The term 'depressed' had been in use to indicate social and educational backwardness. But its use as a constitutional epithet would increase the confusion. Moreover, it was not the intention of the government to label any particular caste or tribe with the stigma of untouchability or depressed character. Hence the value-free term 'scheduled' was adopted, as the castes concerned would be entered into a schedule for electoral purposes.<sup>102</sup>

## VI

The first and foremost problem in connection with the implementation of this constitutional programme was to define the Scheduled Castes and to fix up their final list. The Simon Commission had recommended that the Franchise Committee would undertake for each province the framing of a definition of 'depressed classes' and the determination of their numbers. The Committee decided that the term should be applied only to those who were untouchables.<sup>103</sup> The Communal Decision had also recommended this general principle. But modifications were allowed where the application of the general criterion of untouchability was likely to result in a definition unsuitable to the special conditions of the province.

The Bengal Government decided that the criterion of untouchability would be unsuitable to the general conditions of Bengal and adopted instead a more general criterion of "social and political backwardness". A provisional list of such castes was prepared and a Resolution in January 1933 declared that: "The list has been prepared on the basis of the social and political backwardness of these castes and the necessity of securing for them special representation in order to protect their interests". However, before making the list final, the Bengal Government decided to publish it for discussion and invited opinions from associations and individuals for inclusion or non-inclusion of any caste or castes in the list.<sup>104</sup> Along with this, the district officers were also asked to examine the "social, political, economic and educational position of the castes" in their areas "to determine whether they were below the general level of development".<sup>105</sup> By September, the government received a number of such representations. The recommendations of the Divisional Commissioners and District Officers had also been carefully considered. On the basis of that a final list was prepared and forwarded to the Government of India. It included 76 castes, while the previous provisional list had 86.<sup>106</sup>

When the Government of India Bill was announced, the First Schedule to the Bill defined the Scheduled Castes, as "Such castes, races and tribes corresponding to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes' as His Majesty in Council may specify". The Government of Bengal had some objections to this definition. First of all, the term 'depressed classes' was never precisely defined; it was used in a loose manner covering a miscellaneous group of castes, races and tribes. The Poona Pact on the other hand, had stipulated that the 'Scheduled

Castes' must belong to the Hindu community. But if the definition proposed were to stand, it would imply that all races or tribes, whether they belonged to the Hindu community or not, should be included within the term 'Scheduled Caste'. In that case, 'Scheduled Caste' population would be raised by over half a million. Moreover, Christian members of such castes would have to be included. Such an "extension of the Poona Pact to non-Hindus, would represent a political change of the first importance".<sup>107</sup> Caste Hindu opinion would strongly resent this inflation of the Scheduled Caste numbers. The Scheduled Caste leaders would take equally strong objection to it. And Indian Christian opinion would be grievously shocked by the suggestion that some of their co-religionists should be grouped for electoral purposes with the Scheduled Castes. Finally, this would also affect delimitation of constituencies.<sup>108</sup>

The Secretary of State accepted the objections of the Bengal Government and decided to revise the existing definition in the First Schedule to the Bill.<sup>109</sup> Indian Christians all over India were to be excluded from the definition of the Scheduled Castes; and in Bengal alone, persons professing tribal religions and Buddhism were also to be excluded from this definition.<sup>110</sup> All these revisions were incorporated in the Scheduled Caste Order of 1936, which also contained the final list of the Scheduled Castes for the purposes of the First, Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Government of India Act of 1935. The list included 76 castes and was mostly similar to the one forwarded to the Government of India in September 1933, the major difference being the exclusion of the Sutradhars who protested against their inclusion and the inclusion of Sundis who had put up a vigorous agitation for inclusion.<sup>111</sup>

As on the previous occasions, the list was full of anomalies. It included a number of tribes which did not as such belong to the 'Hindu' community. On the other hand, it excluded many castes which did not want to be included, such as the Telis, Kalus, Jogis and Sutradhars. But it incorporated many others against their wishes, as in the opinion of the Government they fulfilled the conditions of social and economic backwardness. However, many of them lived in a similar socio-economic condition as those excluded from the list. Therefore, sometimes the principle of free choice and sometimes the judgement of the government decided the status of a caste. And this judgement was entirely subjective, as there was no definite standard to measure the social backwardness of a caste.<sup>112</sup>



The list thus prepared was nevertheless final, so far as electoral arrangements under the new constitution were concerned. And it was to be followed in matters of recruitment to the public services as well — both provincial higher services and ministerial jobs.<sup>113</sup> In this sphere, no further step was immediately deemed necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Poona Pact, although in 1936 fifteen per cent of the ministerial vacancies in nine districts of Bengal were reserved for the minorities and the backward classes.<sup>114</sup>

The other problem connected with the implementation of the constitutional reforms was related to delimitation of Scheduled Caste constituencies. Past electoral records showed that in many districts where more than half of the population belonged to these castes, only caste Hindu candidates were elected in all the previous elections. Even the representatives of some of the lower castes in the legislature did not truly represent their interests. Some of them were substantial landlords, like Prasanna Deb Kaikat of Jalpaiguri, Ranjit Pal Choudhuri of Ranaghat or Srish Chandra Nandi, the Maharaja of Kasimbazar. Some represented the Congress, like Hem Chandra Naskar, Mohini Mohan Das or Hossemi Raut. So the "real point" was not returning a few Scheduled Caste candidates, "but returning members who represent the Scheduled Castes". And with this purpose in view, special constituencies had to be devised.<sup>115</sup> These reserved seats, as decided by the Provincial Advisory Committee, had to be confined to rural areas alone, where such people were mostly concentrated and were to be distributed on the basis of their population by divisions and districts.<sup>116</sup> A preliminary calculation showed that roughly 49 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population lived in western Bengal, 28 per cent in northern Bengal and 23 per cent in eastern Bengal. The distribution of seats then ought to be about 15 for western Bengal, 8 for northern Bengal and 7 for eastern Bengal. No district with less than one per cent of the Scheduled Caste population of the province would get any reserved seat. Later, the rule was revised to allot one seat each to five such districts, i.e. Howrah (0.69), Nadia (0.63), Murshidabad (0.69), Malda (0.69) and Tippera (0.75); Bogra (0.27) and Pabna (0.42) were combined to get one seat; but Rajshahi (0.48), Noakhali (0.27) and Chittagong (0.18) received no seat at all.<sup>117</sup>

Another knotty problem that intrigued the Bengal government, was whether the members of the Scheduled Castes should be freely allowed to contest the unreserved seats as well. It was found that in two divisions, Presidency and Rajshahi, and in eight districts (Jalpaiguri was

for this purpose combined with Siliguri) the Scheduled Castes were in a majority; in some other districts the numbers of the Scheduled Castes and the rest of the Hindu community were nearly equal. Hence, if they were allowed to contest unreserved seats without restriction they could capture several seats over and above the reserved quota of 30. The number of such additional seats, given the present numerical ratio, might be as large as 8, with the consequence of 38 out of 66 General rural seats in Bengal going to the members of the Scheduled Castes. This "may not only defeat the objects of the (Poona) Pact itself, but may result in a travesty of the whole principle of representation." As the pact stood, it could only be dissolved with the mutual consent of the parties. But if the Scheduled Castes of Bengal were placed in such a privileged position, then their consent was not likely to be secured easily. Thus the Pact might result in a permanent advantage to the Scheduled Castes at the expense of the caste Hindus. "The protection, in the peculiar situation in Bengal", the local government argued, "..... need not go further; if it does so, the reservation passes from protection to domination."<sup>118</sup>

The Indian Association and some of the Hindu members of the Legislative Council also demanded that the members of the Scheduled Castes should be barred from contesting any unreserved seat, except in constituencies where there was no reserved seat at all.<sup>119</sup> But the Secretary of the All Bengal Depressed Classes Federation argued that such prevention would "virtually amount to denial of the rights of the Scheduled Castes as members of the General Hindu community".<sup>120</sup> And naturally, this would be a negation of the central idea of the Poona Pact. So ultimately the members of the Scheduled Castes were allowed to contest for the unreserved seats as well, along with the 30 reserved seats. The polling for the Primary (Panel) election for the reserved seats took place on 21 November 1936 and that for the general elections between 18 and 22 January 1937.<sup>121</sup> The results showed that in addition to 30 reserved seats, the Scheduled Castes had also captured two more non-reserved seats.<sup>122</sup> And the coalition ministry that was formed subsequently by A.K. Fazlul Huq included two Scheduled Caste ministers, Mukunda Behari Mullick (Namasudra) and Prasanna Deb Raikat (Rajbansi).<sup>123</sup>

The "Government is ready, has always been and will always be ready, to help (the) Scheduled Caste.....", declared Huq in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on 14 March 1949.<sup>124</sup> In fact, from 1937 onwards, the government had been offering all conceivable facilities

to the members of the Scheduled Castes, particularly in the sphere of education. A state scholarship for study abroad and 19 special scholarships for medical education for the Scheduled Caste students were created. A recurring provision of about Rs. 30,000 was sanctioned for other scholarships and stipends for the students belonging to the Scheduled Castes, along with an additional lump provision of Rs. 5 Lakhs for affording them further educational facilities. A Special Officer belonging to the Scheduled Caste community was appointed to look after their educational needs. And a Scheduled Caste Education Committee was appointed in 1939, with Dr W.A. Jenkins as the Chairman, the Special Officer as the Secretary and 13 Scheduled Caste M.L.A.s as members. The Committee was supposed to "investigate the problem of improving the education of the Scheduled castes in the province and to make their recommendations in the matter..."<sup>125</sup>

In the public services, however, the Scheduled Castes did not make much headway. Only two of their members in 1937-38 and three in 1938-39 could get through the Special Clerkship Examination, the corresponding figures for the Bengal Civil Service Examination being only two for both the years. Among 32 appointments made by the Public Service Commission through selection in 1937-38, only one Scheduled Caste candidate was appointed in the Bengal Medical Service (Upper) and among 36 such appointments made in 1938-39 one such candidate was selected as Inspector of Factories. In the latter case, of course, the Scheduled Caste candidate was appointed by the government by overruling the prior claim of a caste Hindu nominee recommended by the Commission. And then, in the sphere of representative bodies, the new Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act of 1939 provided for 3 seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes to be filled in by nomination.<sup>126</sup>

## VII

'Protective discrimination'<sup>127</sup> in favour of the 'depressed classes', later called the 'Scheduled Castes', was thus a persistent feature of British policy in Bengal. It had started developing since the beginning of the twentieth century and by 1937 it had become firmly established. The Bengal government was a bit uncertain about its possible coverage, partly because of the necessity of patronising the Muslims who were politically more important in this province than the 'depressed classes', and partly because the problem of untouchability

and social discrimination or disability was relatively less severe in Bengal than in other parts of India. The central government on the other hand, wanted to introduce a uniform policy throughout India and the reluctant Bengal government was, therefore, forced into it. Of course, the latter were never wholly averse to it. The colonial ethnographers and the census reports had already pointed out the existence of a depressed community in Bengal which deserved special protection of the government. And the political exigencies were also dictating such a policy, which would run parallel to the policy of rallying the Muslims. The difference between the two governments was merely on the form of such a protective policy and not certainly about its rationale or desirability.

The most important question in this connection was to determine the probable beneficiaries of such a protective policy. The Bengal government sought to solve this elusive problem by preparing lists of such castes on no less than eight occasions between 1917 and 1936, each list being taken to be an improvement over the previous one and each list being found faulty on the next occasion. As a result, they included different sets of social groups, although some names were common in all. This anomalous situation was partly due to a continuous process of social mobility and partly due to the absence of any objective criterion to determine the social rank of the different groups. And it was perhaps not even possible to fix up any such objective criterion. Hence, the subjective judgement of the government alone decided whether a particular caste deserved the special protection of the government. Thus the colonial government became a more direct arbiter of social and economic life in the country and the system of patronage-distribution became dependent on caste-identity or a subjective assessment of the socio-economic conditions of not the individuals but the castes which they belonged to. Caste-consciousness, as a result, was articulated in the field of secondary group relations and the structural pluralism was reinforced.

This brings us to the question of the role of the state in a plural society and its possible impact. In a liberal pluralist society, the state sometimes intervenes to prevent discrimination, but it never makes any formal distinction between groups of people, defined in terms of racial or ethnic origin, either for providing benefits or inflicting penalties. In such a society, the individual gets his economic or political rewards on the basis of his personal merits and not of his group affiliation. In such a system the policy of the government is strictly *laissez-*

*faire*. In corporate pluralism, on the other hand, racial or ethnic groups are recognised as valid social entities and the distribution pattern of political power and economic rewards is based on group-affiliation and group rights. In other words, group-membership plays a significant role in educational access, occupational placement, income, political power and other similar matters. The very logic of this reward-system thus puts pressure on the members of the racial or ethnic communities to stay within the group for marriage, close personal friendship, institutional life and social identity. Structural pluralism is thus emphasized and sustained.<sup>128</sup> In fact, it sometimes becomes necessary to adopt such a model of rewards distribution in order to allow submerged groups, which in the past have been severely discriminated against, to catch up with the other groups within a reasonable span of time. But in a colonial set up, the model might have other justification too—notably the imperatives of a policy of *divide et impera*. And this may perhaps explain why in the early twentieth century the British government in India moved away from its early *laissez faire* (so far as its reward system was concerned) to a policy of protective discrimination or in other words, from a model of liberal pluralism to that of corporate pluralism.

What Eugene Irschik concluded for Madras may perhaps be legitimately generalised for India, and for that matter for Bengal as well. On the one hand, the colonial government, through all these executive and constitutional measures, were perhaps seriously trying to redress the existing social imbalance in Indian society. But on the other, by encouraging self-awareness and political aspirations of the lower castes, they tried to keep the nation divided and weak, at a time when anti-imperialist agitation was gathering momentum all over the country. It had now become necessary "to popularize the need for a continued British connection with India and in so doing maintain the stability of the British position."<sup>129</sup> "As regards the depressed classes", wrote the Viceroy of India, Lord Willingdon, to the Secretary of State in February 1934, "our objective is to raise them from degradation and merge them in the general level of the population."<sup>130</sup> And for that purpose it was decided to offer them "special protection" of the government.<sup>131</sup> It indicated, in the words of Willingdon himself, a change from an "attitude of neutrality" to a policy of "active assistance". At the same time it also seemed to be politically expedient to secure them "adequate and suitable representation" in the legislative bodies, so that they could exercise "real political influence",

not only to make their needs known, but also "to ensure that those needs are not overlooked."<sup>132</sup> It seemed "preferable from every point of view to encourage them to make use of their powerful block of votes to extract for themselves the concessions they desire."<sup>133</sup> Attempts to politicise caste were, therefore, motivated not by a philanthropic urge alone, but by the desire to encourage separatist political tendencies as well.

Indian society also responded in a way the colonial government expected it to. The constant attempt of the government at classification and quantification of castes for the purposes of patronage distribution made Indians conscious of their caste identity. It had always been an important factor in India, so far as the primary or interpersonal relationships were concerned. But now it became important in the realm of secondary group relations as well, thus transforming a socio-cultural dichotomy into a conflict of interests. Caste in the process became a politically relevant category. Structural separation between castes, particularly between the lower castes at the one end and the higher castes on the other, was thus reinforced and given an additional lease of life — although such separation was now valid more in a secular rather than ritual context.

#### NOTES

1. Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies; Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol. IV, (New Delhi, 1986), p.284; also see his other essay, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia, *Folk*, No.26, 1984.
2. J.G. Cumming, Secy., GB, General to the Secy., GI, Education, 18 March 1911, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10-C/30-2, March 1911, Progs. Nos. 29-31.
3. Richard P. Cronin, *British Policy in Bengal 1905-1912: Partition and the New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, (Calcutta, 1977), pp.162-165.
4. GB, General (Education), File No.11C-9-1, April 1913, Prog. No.67.
5. 'Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam for the years 1907-8 to 1911-12', GB, General (Education), File No.8R-16, May 1914, Prog. Nos.1-3; 'Report on Public Instruction in Bengal for the year 1908-9', GB, General (Education), File No.8R-26, December 1909, Progs. Nos.62-63.

6. GB, General (Education), File No.11C-9-1, April 1913, Prog. No.67.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. GB, General (Education), File No.11C-17, April 1914, Progs. Nos.59-60, K.W., p.1.
10. *BLCP*, Vol.46, 28 February 1914, p.161.
11. GB, General (Education), File No.11C-47, September 1913, Progs. Nos.14-15.
12. *Ibid.*, K.W., pp.1-2.
13. *BLCP*, Vol.45, 17 March 1913, p.398.
14. GB, General (Education), File No.2S-33, November 1916, Progs. Nos.28-29.
15. *BLCP*, Vol.48, 7 August 1916, pp.384-385.
16. Resolution No.391 T.G., General Department (Education), 13 June 1914, GB, General (Education), File No.8R-11, August 1914, Progs. Nos.77-89.
17. *BLCP*, Vol.46, 1 September 1914, pp.840-841; GB, General (Education), File No.11C-9-1, April 1913, Prog. No.67; GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., p.9; GB, Education, File No.11C-33, April 1921, Progs. Nos.28-29, K.W., p.1.
18. H. Wheeler, Secy., GI, Home to Chief Secy., GB, 12 May 1916, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17.
19. GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., pp.5, 10.
20. GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., pp.11-12.
21. L.S.S. O'Malley, Secy., GB, General, to Secy., GI, Home, 2 January 1917, *op.cit.*
22. Krishna Kumar Mitra to L.J. D'Santos, Registrar, General Dept., GB, 7 August 1916, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., p.4.
23. *BLCP*, Vol.49, 4 September 1917, p.702.
24. Hem Chandra Sarkar to L.J. D'Santos, Registrar, General Dept., GB, 15 July

- 1916, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., p.3.
25. W.C. Wordsworth, Offg. D.P.I., to Secy. GB, General, 6 July 1918, GB, General (Education), File No.1G-33, October 1918, Progs. Nos.17-24.
  26. *Ibid*; also L.S.S. O'Malley, Secy. GB, General (Education), to D.P.I., Bengal, 18 October 1918, GB, General (Education), File No.1G-33, October 1918, Progs. Nos.17-24.
  27. L.S.S. O'Malley, Secy., GB, General (Education), to D.P.I., Bengal, 20 May 1918, GB, General (Education), File No.1H-2, B May 1920, Progs. Nos.34-44.
  28. K.L. Datta, Offg. Registrar, Calcutta University, to D.P.I., Bengal, 27 July 1918, GB, General (Education), File No.1H-2, B May 1920, Progs. Nos.34-44.
  29. D.P.I. to Secy., GB, General, 2 August 1919, GB, General (Education), File No.1L-31, B December 1919, Progs. Nos.61-71.
  30. D.P.I. to Secy., GB, General, 6 February 1920, GB, General (Education), File No.1L-13, B April 1920, Progs., Nos.253-255.
  31. L.S.S. O'Malley, Secy, GB, General, to Secy., GB, Education, 24 July 1920, GB, General (Education), File No.8R-22, B December 1920, Progs. Nos.282-283.
  32. Minute of Dissent by P.C. Lyon, 10 September 1916, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.167 B (1-2) of 1916; Sir, J.H. Du Boulay, Secy., GI, Home (Political), to Chief Secy., GB, 20 March 1917, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.219 (1-2) of 1917.
  33. Note by H.L. Stephenson, 6 February 1920, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10, K.W., p.14.
  34. *Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill*, (Delhi, Superintendent, Government Printing, India 1919), pp.6-7.
  35. Quoted in GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10, K.W., p.13.
  36. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.6R-37, September 1919, Progs. Nos.2-4, K.W., p.5.
  37. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10, K.W., p.13.
  38. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.6R-37, September 1919, Progs. Nos.2-4, K.W., p.5.



39. Telegram from Bengal, Appointment, Darjeeling to India, Home, Simla, 15 September 1919, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.6R-37, September 1919, Progs. Nos.2-4.
40. S.P. O'Donnel, Secy., GI, Reform, to Chief Secy., GB, 28 January 1920, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10.
41. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10, K.W., p.13.
42. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61, K.W., p.3; Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India*, (Delhi, 1984), Table 13, p.126.
43. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10, K.W., pp.13-14.
44. H.E. Spry, Addl. Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Reforms, 24 March 1924, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.6R-2, April 1920, Progs. Nos.3-10, also, Appendix B.
45. H. Tonkinson, Secy., GI, Home to Chief Secy., GB, 21 May 1925, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.6R-42, July 1925, Progs. Nos.3-4.
46. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.6R-42, July 1925, Progs. Nos.3-4, K.W., pp.3-5; *Report, Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919*, (Calcutta 1919), Vol.I, Part I, p.189.
47. *Census of India* 1921, Vol.1, p.225; Vol. V, Part I, p.365; also GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61, K.W., p.4.
48. L. Birley, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, 22 June 1925, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.6R-42, July 1925, Progs. Nos.3-4, also K.W., pp.3-7.
49. *BLCP*, Vol.1, No.5, 14 March 1921, p.43.
50. GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.8D-1, B May 1913, Progs. Nos.126-128, Serial 1.
51. GB, General (Education), File No.11C-112, December 1919, Progs. Nos.244-254, K.W., p.2, Appendix.
52. H. McPherson, Secy., GI, to Chief Secy., GB, 13 September 1920, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.8P-40 of 1920, November 1921, Progs. Nos.38-41.
53. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, November 1922, Progs. Nos.114-417, K.W., pp.1-2, 7.

54. Notification No.5798A — The 27th May 1922; Memorandum for Guidance (of the) Selection Committee, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, November 1922, Progs. Nos.114-417, also Appendix F., p.xvii.
55. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, November 1922, Progs. Nos.114-417, Appendix E, p.xv., Appendix F, p.xx.
56. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, October 1923, Progs. Nos.3-19, K.W., pp.2-3, 9-11, Appendix A, p.iii.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Notification No.7721A — The 30th July 1923; Memorandum for Guidance (of the) Selection Committee, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, October 1923, Progs. Nos.3-19.
59. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, October 1923, Progs. Nos.3-19, Appendix A, p.xvi.
60. GB, Education (Education), File No.11C-92, December 1923, Progs. Nos. 8-9, K.W., pp.1-2; GB, Education (Education), File No.11C-105, B December 1923, Progs. Nos.1033-34.
61. H.E. Stapleton to W.B. Finnigan, Offg. A.D.P.I., 17 November 1922, GB, Education (Education), File No.11C-205, November 1922, Progs. Nos.98-99, Appendix; 'Financial Position of the Society', GB, Education (Education), File No.1E-4, B December 1926, Progs. Nos.306-313.
62. D.P.I., Bengal to Secy., GB, Education, 17 February 1926, GB, Education (Education), File No.1E-4, B December 1926, Progs. Nos.306-313; Education Dept., GB, to DPI, Bengal, 4 March 1927, GB, Education (Education), File No.1E-3, B July 1927, Progs. Nos.28-30.
63. GB, Education (Education), File No.11C-47, B September 1927, Progs. Nos.241-243, Abstract.
64. Viceroy to Governor of Bengal, 14 July 1928, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114, November 1928, Progs. Nos.15-16, K.W., p.1.
65. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114, November 1928, Progs. Nos.15-16, K.W., pp.2-3; GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Progs. Nos.7-20, K.W., p.5.
66. Report (of the enquiry); H.E. Stapleton, D.P.I., Bengal to Secy., GB, Education, 22 March 1929, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Progs. Nos.7-20.

67. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Progs. Nos.7-20, K.W., p.8.
68. Note by P.C. Mitter, 24 September 1929, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Progs. Nos.7-10, K.W., pp.2-6.
69. A.J. Dash, Secy., GB, Education to Secy. GI, Education, Health and Lands, 23/24 September 1930, GB, Education (Education), File No.1E-6, B December 1930, Progs. Nos.256-257, also K.W., pp.2-3, 5.
70. W.S. Hopkyns, Chief Secy., GB, to all Commissioners of Divisions, 7 October 1929, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-146, December 1929, Prog. No.5.
71. Correspondence with district officers in GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.ID-146 of 1929, September 1930, Progs. Nos.12-17, also K.W., pp.3-5, Appendices A and B.
72. R.H. Hutchins, Addl. Dy. Secy., GB, Appointment to all Commissioners of Divisions, 12 August 1930, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.4D-15 of 1929, August 1930, Prog. No.6; also K.W., pp.4-5.
73. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.4D-10 of 1930, June 1931, Progs. Nos.36-41, K.W., pp.2-3.
74. Appointment Dept. Government of Bengal, Memorandum Nos.3540-3554A, 28 April 1931, GB, Education (Miscellaneous), File No.3S-1, B June, 1931, Progs. Nos.44-46.
75. *BLCB*, Vol.41, No.2, 28 March 1933, pp.634-635; Vol.41, No.3, 3 April 1933, pp.192-193.
76. H.E. Stapleton, D.P.I., Bengal to Secy. GB, Education, 27 October 1930, GB, Education (Education), File No.7S-3, April 1932, Progs. Nos.34-36.
77. GB, Education (Education), File No.7S-3, April 1932, Progs. Nos.34-36, K.W., p.1.
78. H.R. Wilkinson, Secy., GB, Education, to D.P.I., Bengal, 27 April 1932, GB, Education (Education), File No.7S-3, April 1932, Progs. Nos.34-36.
79. Telegram from Home, New Delhi to Bengal, Calcutta, 20 December 1932, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.2/33.
80. R.N. Reid, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy, GI, Home, 30 December 1932, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.2/33.

81. C.M. Trivedy, Dy. Secy., GI, Home to Chief Secy., GB, 25 January 1933, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.2/33.
82. H.G. Hallet, Secy., GI, Home, to Chief Secy., GB, 24 February 1934, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.210/34.
83. Note by C.C. Ghosh and B.P. Singh Roy, 14 March 1934, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.210/34, K.W., p.3.
84. Note by G.P. Hogg, 12 March 1934, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.210/34, K.W., p.3.
85. Chief Secy., GB, to GI, Home, 19 March 1934, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.210/34.
86. See, Telegram from Secy., All India Varnashram Sangh and Temple Defence Committee, Calcutta, to Home Member, Simla; also Gen. Secy., Shree Sanatan Dharma Sabha, to Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, 30 August 1934, GI, Home (Political), File No.50/8/34-Poll.
87. *Report, Indian Statutory Commission*, (Calcutta, 1930), Vol.I, p.39.
88. *Ibid*, Vol.II, p.67.
89. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1R-54, April 1932, Progs. Nos.43-83, K.W., pp.28-29.
90. *Ibid*, pp.30-31.
91. *Ibid*, pp.30-32, 34-36.
92. H. Graham, Special Officer, GB, to Jt. Secy., Indian Franchise Committee, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1R-54, April 1932, Progs. Nos.42-83.
93. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1R-54, April 1932, Progs. Nos.42-83, K.W., pp.30, 36.
94. *Report of the Bengal Franchise Committee*, (Calcutta, 1932), pp.4, 24.
95. Note by R.N. Gilchrist, 20 June 1932; Decision in Joint Meeting held on 25th June 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-140 of 1932, July 1933, Progs. Nos.16-60; GB, Appointment, File No.1E-25, B September 1933, Progs. Nos.9-37, Abstract.
96. 'Communal Decision', 4 August 1932, GI, Home (Political), K.W. to File No.41/5/32-Poll. According to the Decision, in a house of 250 members in Bengal, 80 were declared to be general seats, out of which 10 were earmarked for the

'depressed classes'. The rest of the seats were distributed as follows: Muslims - 119, Indian Christians - 2, Anglo-Indians - 4, Europeans - 11, Landholders - 5, Universities - 2, Labour - 8, Commerce, Industry, Mining and Planting - 19.

97. Marc Galanter, *op.cit.*, p.31.
98. Private Secy. of Viceroy to Governor, Bengal, Telegram No.672S., 25 September 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos.20-28.
99. Foreign, Simla to Bengal, Darjeeling, Telegram No.2136, 25 September 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos.20-28.
100. 'Statement of His Majesty's Government Regarding the Poona Agreement', GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos. 20-28; telegram from Viceroy to Governor of Bombay, 25 September 1932, GI, Home (Political), K.W. to File No.41/5/32-Poll.
101. Bengal to Foreign, Simla, Telegram No.50, 26 September 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos.20-28; telegram from GB to Viceroy, 26 September 1932, GI, Home (Political), K.W. to File No.41/5/32-Poll.
102. GB, Appointment, File No.8L-62, B May 1933, Prog. No.419, K.W., pp.2-3.
103. GB, Appointment, File No.8L-15, B April 1933, Prog. No.37, K.W., pp.2-3.
104. Resolution by — The Government of Bengal, Appointment (Reforms) Department, No.122 A.R., 16 January 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61, also K.W., p.4.
105. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to All Commissioners of Divisions and all District Officers (except Chittagong Hill Tracts), 4 April 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos. 9-61.
106. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to Reforms Commissioner, GI, 19 September 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61.
107. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt.Secy., GB, to C.K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms, 2 April 1935, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R 88, November 1935, Progs. Nos.27-39. The Christian converts from the 'depressed classes' were enjoying special educational facilities along with other members of such classes since 192), *cf.* GB, Education (Education), File No.1E-8, B September 1929, Progs. Nos.294-297, Abstract.

108. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB to C.K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms, 26 July 1935, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-88, November 1935, Progs. Nos.27-39.
109. C.K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms to R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, 18 May 1935, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-88, November 1935, Progs. Nos.27-39.
110. Reforms, Simla, to the Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, 8 October 1935, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-88, November 1935, Progs. Nos.27-39.
111. The Government of India (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1936 (30 April 1936), GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-361 of 1935, June 1936, Progs. Nos.32-42; note by R.N. Gilchrist, 17 December 1934, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-29 of 1934, February 1935, Progs. Nos.1-15, K.W., p.3; also see the petition of the Sutradhars in GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-29 of 1934, June 1935, Progs. Nos.12-24.
112. The Secy., Indian Association, Calcutta, to Reforms Officer, GB, 15 February 1933; the Secy., Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha to Reforms Officer, GB, 15 February 1933; R.C. Roy, Hony. Secy., Bengal Depressed Classes Association to Reforms Officer, GB, 17 February 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61; also *BLCP*, Vol.41, No.2, 27 March 1933, pp.572-573.
113. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.4D-8, July 1935, Progs. Nos.23-24, Appendix C, Precis by E.N. Blandy, 14 January 1935.
114. G.P. Hogg, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, 20 August 1934, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.4M-1 of 1933, September 1934, Progs. Nos.7-12; also Memorandum No.9898A, Government of Bengal, Appointment (Appointment) Dept., 21 September 1936, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.4D-3 of 1934, November 1936 Progs. Nos.31-44.
115. Note by R.N. Gilchrist, 23.8.1932, also , Appendix I & II, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-133 of 1932, July 1933, Progs. Nos. 20-211, K.W. p.3.
116. Appointment Department, Reforms, Memorandum on the Scheduled Caste Constituencies for the Bengal Legislative Assembly, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-30, April 1934, Progs. Nos. 103-111.
117. Appointment Department, Reforms, Statement V: Allocation of Depressed Class Seats in Rural Area, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-30, April 1934, Progs. Nos. 103-111, also, K.W., p.22.
118. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to W.H.Lewis, Reforms Officer, GI, 27

December 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-30, April 1934, Progs. Nos. 103-111.

119. Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, to C.K. Rhodes, Jt. Secy., GI, Reforms, 26 July 1935, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-9 of 1935, January 1936, Progs. Nos. 1-17; also, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-75, July 1935, Progs. Nos. 29-40, K.W., p.6.
120. Aprakash Gayen, Acting Secy., All Bengal Depressed Classes' Federation, to R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Jt. Secy., GB, 15 July 1935, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. 1R-9 of 1935, January 1936, Progs. Nos. 1-17.
121. 'Bengal Legislative Assembly Electoral Programme', GB, Home (Constitution and Election), File No. R3 E-58, May 1937, Progs. Nos. 92-125.
122. Reforms, Bengal, Calcutta, to Reforms, New Delhi, Telegram No. 3413, A.R., 30 January 1937, GB, Home (Constitution and Elections), File No. R3E-27, May 1937, Progs. Nos. 1-13.
123. 'Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the second half of March 1937', GB, Home (Confidential), File No. 10/37.
124. *Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 14 March 1939, p. 324.
125. *Two Years of Provincial Autonomy in Bengal*, Publicity Department, Government of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1939), pp. 32, 48, 80, 275.
126. *Bengal Ministry and the Hindus of Bengal*, Publicity Department, Government of Bengal, (Calcutta 1940), pp. 1-5.
127. So far as the British period is concerned, the term 'Protective Discrimination' seems to be more appropriate than 'Compensatory Discrimination' used recently by Marc Galanter. The fundamental assumption of the British was that the interests of the relatively backward communities needed special 'protection'. It was only after independence that the Constitution of India proposed to 'compensate' the Scheduled Castes for the past discrimination they had been subjected to. cf. Marc Galanter, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3 and Chapter 3.
128. For details, cf. Milton Gordon, 'Models of Pluralism: The New American Dilemma', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 454, pp. 178-188; also, his 'Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations', in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).
129. Eugene Irschik, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), p. 55.

130. Extract from a private and personal letter from Viceroy to Sir Samuel Hoare, 13 February 1934, GI, Reforms Office, File No. 180/33-Reforms, K.W., p.18.
131. W.H.Lewis to Hallet, GI, Home, 15.12.33, GI, Reforms Office, File No. 169/33-R.
132. 'The Viceroy's Speech in Reply to an Address Presented by a Deputation of The Leading Members of the Depressed Classes on Wednesday, The 29th March 1933', GI, Home (Political), File No. 50/IV/33-Poll.
133. Note by M.W.Yeatts, 26.11.33, GI, Reforms Office, File No. 180/33-Reforms, K.W.



# 3

## Caste and Social Mobility

### I

Social mobility was not a rare phenomenon in British or pre-British India. But so far as the Hindus were concerned, and they constituted the majority of the population, it had to take place within the structural framework defined by the caste system. Although theoretically, caste position being determined by birth was immutable in the upward direction, in reality, as we have seen, the system did permit vertical mobility generated by the opening up of new frontiers of economic opportunities. The phenomenon became much more pervasive under British rule which altered the political base of the caste system, while a market economy, operating under the aegis of the colonial government, with marketable land and labour, struck at the economic foundations of the traditional hierarchical, yet interdependent, structure of relationships. Nevertheless, the system prevailed as an important determinant of social behaviour of the Hindus. Vertical social mobility in a secular context, therefore, had to be ritualised through movement upward in the scale of caste-ranking which was still prestigious. In other words, those who had improved their economic position, taking advantage of the new economic opportunities, demanded a corresponding higher rank in caste hierarchy and organised articulate caste agitations in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Such movements were possible as this limited mobility generated greater desire for social upliftment among the lower caste masses and also perhaps a greater urge for social equality.

It is customary to highlight two stages in the development of such movements. In the first phase they aimed at acquiring the symbols

of high status. Then in the second phase the emphasis shifted to the more material sources of high status, i.e. education, employment and political power.<sup>1</sup> But what remains unexplained in this model of interpretation is the element of *protest* involved in all such movements. Adoption of higher ritual symbols or 'Sanskritization', as the term now seems to have been almost universally accepted, need not be taken as mere emulation of the upper castes, for it also meant an *appropriation* of certain symbols which had so long been the exclusive privileges of a few at the top. And the demand for a share in the economic resources and political power was indeed a challenge to the existing system of their distribution, which even in a changed situation made them virtually a monopoly of the upper castes. But this very aspect of such movements made caste a politically relevant category in an age of institutional politics, operating within the competition-collaboration syndrome. The colonial government, in their perennial search for friends committed to the continuation of their rule in India, often found in such upwardly mobile lower castes some enthusiastic allies who could be played off against their high caste Hindu adversaries. This gradual process of the politicisation of caste through the policy of protective discrimination was completed by 1937, when most of the caste movements lost their early protestant character and began to indulge in a politics of 'reservation' under a loyal elite leadership that used the backwardness of their respective communities for furtherance of their own sectarian political aspirations.

## II

The constant tendency of the colonial government of stereotyping and compartmentalising Indian society for purposes of patronage distribution led to a reinforced caste consciousness and caste solidarity among the Hindus. As the British thus tried to define Indian society, the people in the lower rungs of that society tried to take advantage of the process in order to improve their position, at least in the imperial corpus of knowledge. The result was that the Indians increasingly began to identify themselves in terms of caste, although consciousness about the disparities in caste system was by no means a new phenomenon appearing for the first time during British period.

An organised protest against caste disabilities had first appeared in Bengal in the shape of the heterodox, protestant *Bhakti* movement between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. It was led by Śrī

Chaitanya and his disciples, whose avowed goal was the social and spiritual upliftment of the oppressed sections of the society. Later his disciples were organised into a sect called *Gauriya Vaishnava Sampradaya*. It was based on a syncretistic tradition that combined both the early liberalism of the first preceptor and the later day orthodoxy of the canonical system developed on *Smarta-Puranic* lines by the *sada* (six) *Goswamis* of Brindabana. And it had brought in also the *Sahajiyas* who enjoyed a tremendous influence on the lower orders of the society. Thus *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* gradually turned into an institution through which the upwardly mobile groups began to express and assert themselves socially and tried to establish their higher status in society.<sup>2</sup> But towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, the Brahman *gurus* of the sect, scared by the threat to their authority posed by the ever increasing number of lower caste converts, began to introduce caste rules and codes of differentiation. The Brahman devotees were allowed to enjoy all sorts of ritualistic privileges, while the untouchables were despised as *Jat Vaishnavas*. As a reaction to this, the more liberal *sahajiya* tradition grew in popularity and a number of deviant sects developed, mostly under non-Brahman *gurus*, who repudiated all established norms of caste distinction. These *Sudra gurus*, most of whom had no link with the orthodox *Gaudiya Vaishnava* order, attracted thousands of lower caste devotees who flocked to them in search of social emancipation.<sup>3</sup> The *Kartabhajas* were one such deistical sect, also the most important one of this rebel tradition, which repudiated idolatry and caste, and attracted, around the middle of the nineteenth century, numerous members of the lower castes desirous of shaking off social disabilities.<sup>4</sup> So were also the *Sahebhdhanis*, while the *Balahadis* had evolved a *Jat-tattva* that tended to turn the existing ritual hierarchy upside down.<sup>5</sup> The itinerant *pirs* were another group of people who also preached in the countryside the message of social equality and the devotees who gathered around them were either low caste Hindus or Muslim converts from their ranks.<sup>6</sup> The Christian missionaries, during this period had also been trying, through their philanthropic activities, to win over such depressed communities, the "human debris of India", as the Bishop of Madras had once described them. As the high caste educated people dashed their hopes of an expansion of Christianity, it was "the pariah community, and not the Brahmin" who began to occupy "the position of highest strategic value" for such missionary activities.<sup>7</sup> Most of the conversions in Bengal since

the early nineteenth century, as William Adam of the Srirampur Baptist Mission had observed, were due to "dissatisfaction with the absurdities and contradictions of the popular (Hindu) creed and worship."<sup>8</sup> And most of the converts, as a recent historian of missionary activities in India concludes, had "either been of very low or of no caste" at all.<sup>9</sup> In Bengal, around the beginning of the twentieth century, several Christian missions were operating in areas where such people lived in great numbers.<sup>10</sup> Through these agencies the idea of social equality ingrained in the tenets of Christianity was gradually being disseminated among the people living at the bottom of the social hierarchy and the conversions that took place, like the earlier conversions to Islam, symbolised attempts on their part to break away from the strangulating hold of the caste system.

As a result of all those liberalising influences, a number of *ajal-chal* and *antyaja* castes around the middle of the nineteenth century became conscious of their separate social identity arising out of their inferior position in society. They could not of course visualise a total destruction of the hierarchy and looked only for positional readjustments within that basic framework. Yet, what we may also identify in their behaviour is the manifestation of a protest mentality or an attitude of defiance to the social authority of the higher castes who had been instrumental to the functioning of the caste system. The first articulate and organised expression of this spirit was the Chandal movement of 1872-73 in Faridpur and Bakarganj districts of eastern Bengal. As the higher caste Hindus, under the instigation of the Kayasthas, refused to dine in the house of a Chandal headman, because of his low social status and defiling occupation, the Chandals of southern Faridpur and north-western Bakarganj embarked upon a social-boycott movement. They decided not to serve the higher caste people, viz., to till their land, or to thatch their huts, and not again to partake of food prepared by any other caste other than Brahmans. As a 'Sanskritizing' effort, women were forbidden to visit the market places and appeals were sent to government for discontinuing the old practice of engaging the Chandal convicts in scavenging work in jails. The movement continued for about four to five months, after which it began to breakdown as the poorer sections found it difficult to sustain without work.<sup>11</sup> Their main social grievance also remained unredressed, as the higher castes still refused to accept food and water from their hands. This led to further development of a social movement among

the Chandals in the late nineteenth century though a *Vaishnava* sect called *Matua*. It preached the messages of complete social equality and spiritual salvation through the performance of wordly duties ('*hate kam, mukhe nam*'). Both these ideas were conducive to the development of social movements among the depressed communities, who were attracted to this sect in large numbers during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. As the higher caste *vaishnavas* continued to despise this sect, its membership remained almost exclusively Chandal.<sup>12</sup> And this explains the effective social mobilization and articulation of the caste-consciousness among the members of this caste, who later on, from the beginning of the twentieth century, claimed themselves to be Namasudras.

Less organised, but similar movements can also be traced during earlier periods of the history of Bengal. Raja Rajballav played a significant role in raising the social status of the Baidyas in the middle of the eighteenth century; so did the *zamindar* family of Kasimbazar in relation to the Tilis during the second half of that century. The upliftment movement among the Chasi Kaibarttas owed much to the efforts of the Kaibartta *zamindar* family of Rani Rashmoni and her association with Sri Ramakrishna, the saint at Dakshineswar, in the early nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Buchanan Hamilton had noticed at the turn of the same century the prevalence of legends associating the Rajbansis of north Bengal with the Kshatriyas of the classical age. Indeed, it was from this time onwards, that some important Rajbansi families, such as that of Mahiram Chaudhuri, had started claiming Bratya Kshatriya status.<sup>14</sup> A movement for wearing sacred thread had also started among the Kayasthas around the same time, under the initiative of Rajnarayan Ray, the Kayastha *zamindar* of Andul and Rajnarayan Mitra.<sup>15</sup> These movements were, however, more elite-oriented and could not involve the masses, as in the case of the Namasudras, and were, therefore, much less effective. Nonetheless, they signified a modest beginning.

Thus even before the British had started census classifications or initiated the policy of protective discrimination, there had been endogenous development of caste movements, protesting against social disabilities or demanding better status in society for individual castes. With the onset of the census operations, however, the whole situation assumed a new dimension. In an elaborate status hierarchy, as caste system was, each group perhaps felt a psychological need to com-

compensate for feelings of inferiority and envy towards those above, by feelings of superiority and contempt for those who stood below. The result, as we have seen in the case of the Chandals, was a stubborn opposition to any upward movement of individuals or groups in social plane, although downward movement was a regular occurrence. Hence, those who were coming up from below looked to the Census Commissioner for public recognition of their higher status, for such recognition, they believed, would ensure, apart from other material advantages from the government, a soft attitude of the indigenous society towards their higher social aspirations. But such agitations for improvement in ritual status were not aimed against the system as a whole and were supported in most cases only by those who had gained in wealth and power, the masses largely remaining indifferent. The movements, therefore, lacked that strength necessary to force a restructuring of the society. The result was that upward social mobility in a secular context, which took place in a restricted degree even in spite of the existence of various constraints, did not necessarily lead to an improvement in ritual status, except perhaps in a few cases, such as of the Mahishyas, Rajbansis and the Namasudras, where the masses could be successfully mobilized. But on the other hand, such agitations brought to the surface all the latent contradictions of Hindu society and divided Bengal politics, in a significant way, along caste lines.

In fact, no part of the census reports from 1891 to 1931 attracted so much attention and created so much excitement as the return of caste. This excitement and tension rose to its highest pitch before the census operations of 1911, threatening disturbance of peace in different quarters. This was because the leaders of almost every caste, the traditional higher castes of Bengal like the Baidyas and the Kayasthas not excluded, frankly looked upon the census as an opportunity of getting formal public recognition of their higher social claims which were denied by their caste superiors. This kind of attitude was the result of a widely shared idea that the object of the census was not merely to show the number of persons belonging to each caste, "but to fix the relative status of different castes and to deal with questions of social superiority". This naturally gave rise to a considerable agitation both at organised and unorganised levels. Hundreds of petitions were received from different caste organisations, their weight alone amounting to one and a half *maund*, claiming changes in nomenclature, demanding a higher place in the order of precedence and

emphasizing affiliation to one of the three twice-born varnas.<sup>16</sup> At the local level, these movements of the lower castes "sometimes involve(d) hostility against the higher castes, and sometimes the action of the lower caste leaders... led to annoyance and opposition on the part of higher castes". In one case, for example, the Namasudras of eastern Bengal boycotted members of their community who were found working in the houses of the Kayasthas, who had been consistently opposing their higher social claims. In another instance, the Goalas, who had sent a petition in order to be classed as Vaisyas, were boycotted by the respectable Hindus, who preferred to obtain their milk from the Muslims rather than from persons whose social claims they were not prepared to recognise.<sup>17</sup> The divisive forces had thus been effectively let loose. Hindu society, as it seemed at that point of time, was almost on the verge of being torn apart. "We have enough of unrest in these troubled time", the *Bengalee* noted with alarm. "Let nothing be done to add to its volume, by riding rough-shod over the cherished caste sentiments of important groups of the Hindu community."<sup>18</sup>

Even the traditional higher castes of Bengal did not stay outside these census controversies regarding caste ranking. Thus the Baidyas claimed a status just next to the Brahmans, while the Kayasthas demanded a position higher than that of the Baidyas. The Aguris on the other hand, liked to be grouped along with the Baidyas and Kayasthas.<sup>19</sup> Among the *Nabasakhs*, the claimants for higher ritual rank were the Sadgops and Tilis, the trading castes like Gandhabanik, Tambulibanik and Barui, the functional castes like Kamar, Napit, Tanti and Mayra (Modak), along with a number of their dissident groups like Madhunapit, Phulnapit and Aswini Tanti.<sup>20</sup> Lower down the hierarchy, among those intermediary castes, which were *jalacharaniya* but with degraded Brahmans, the most vigorous of all agitations was that of a section of the Chasi Kaibarttas who wanted themselves to be dissociated from the Jalia Kaibarttas and to be returned as Mahishya, an ancient caste of much respectability.<sup>21</sup> Below these intermediary castes, were the *ajalchal* castes, among whom the Sahas, the Subarnabaniks and the Jogis were most articulate in pushing their claims for a more respectable ritual status.<sup>22</sup> Finally, among those race castes of Bengal Proper, a section of the Kochs, the Chasadhobas, the Pods and the Chandals adopted new names for their castes, Rajbansi, Satchasi, Padmaraj or Paundra Kshatriya and Namasudra respectively and tried with great vigour to convince the census authorities about their

respectability.<sup>23</sup> In many cases, in order to persuade the authorities more effectively, recommendations of Christian Missionaries were sought and secured. Thus the Principal of the London Missionary College complied to the request of the President of the Bratya Kshatriya Samiti by writing personally to the Chief Secretary of Bengal in support of the petition of the Pod community.<sup>24</sup> The petition of the Namasudras in 1911 was recommended by Rev. C.S. Mead of the Australian Baptist Mission at Orakandi, Faridpur.<sup>25</sup> "An awakened and new born sense of self-respect is at the bottom of the feeling..," observed the *Bengalee* on the eve of the census operations of 1911. "There is a wide-spread desire to level upwards; and this is a feeling with which all Englishmen will readily sympathise, and it deserves to be fostered by a progressive Government which aims at the elevation of the different sections of the community subject to its authority. The action of the Government in granting the prayers of these castes will add to their contentment and enhance their self-respect; and their claims seem to be founded on well-considered grounds."<sup>26</sup>

### III

If we analyse the claims put forth before the census authorities, we will find two types of caste mobility. The first was the attempt to raise the social status of an entire caste like that of Baidya, Kayastha, Aguri, Barui, Gandhabanik, Tambulibanik, Kamar, Napit, Mayra, Jogi, Subarnabanik, Pod and Namasudra. The rest can be classified as attempt by a section of a caste to rise in social esteem in relation to the parent caste. Such fission within a caste was often the outcome of change of occupation from an impure to a purer one. Since the status of a caste in a purity-pollution scale depended, to a large extent, on the nature of its occupation, there was a natural tendency on the part of the lower castes to change their occupation in favour of purer ones. Sometimes particular sections among them abandoned their degrading caste occupation and in course of time emerged as a separate caste with a new designation.<sup>27</sup> Such change of occupation and fission were visible in Bengal from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries.<sup>28</sup> But with the coming of the British, it became easier and more frequent at the same time. Without going into the detailed story of this process, a tabular statement (Table 1) may be sufficient to explain the general trend.



Table 1

Dissident group or present name of the caste	Parent caste or original caste name	Traditional occupation	New occupation
Sadgop	Gop (present Goala)	Cattle-grazing	Agriculture and trade
Tili	Teli	Oil-pressing	Trade and Agriculture
Madhunapit	Napit	Barber	Confectioner
Phulnapit	Napit	Barber	Agriculture
Mahishya	Bhuiya-Khandait-Kaibartta-Chasi-Kaibartta	Fighting-Agriculture & fishing-agriculture (landholding, cultivating & also sometime personally selling the products in the market)	Agriculture (landholding and cultivating but never selling the products personally in the market)
Saha	Sundi	Manufacturer & sale of liquor	Trade and agriculture.
Jogi	Jugi	Weaving	Agriculture and miscellaneous.
Chasadhoba	Dhoba	Washing	Agriculture
Padmaraj	Pod	Fishing and boating	Agriculture
Namasudra	Chandal	Boating and cultivation	Agriculture

Source : This table has been prepared on the basis of information collected from the following sources: *Census of India*, 1891, Vol. III, The Report; *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I; *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I; W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, (Reprint, Delhi, 1973), Vols. I-VI; H.H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1981), Vols. I & II; N.K. Bose, *The Structure of Hindu Society*, translated from Bengali by Andre Beteille, (New Delhi, 1975); N.K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, (Calcutta, 1969), Vol. II; Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1981).

It should be mentioned here that these new professions adopted by the members of the various lower castes were not only pure in a religious sense, but also lucrative in their economic prospect. For a caste

to be vertically mobile in social plane, a mere change of occupation from an impure to a purer one was not sufficient. For that purpose a caste had to become dominant, that is to say, rise higher up in economic and power dimensions in relation to their caste neighbours. In the opinion of Srinivas, a dominant caste in pre-British traditional society was one which could "own a sizeable amount of arable land locally available, have strength of numbers and occupy a high place in local hierarchy."<sup>29</sup> With the coming of the British, however, the whole situation underwent a transformation. The concept of dominance was modified and as Louis Dumont defined it, came to be determined by such other factors as "wealth, possession of landed interests, as well as political power."<sup>30</sup> Individual mobility in economic and power dimensions was not uncommon in pre-British traditional society. But such individual mobility could not affect the ritual rank of a whole caste unless a substantial number of families had similarly risen to comparable prominence. What happened in Bengal in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, was that a considerable number of families, enjoying low ritual position, had moved up in economic and power dimensions in different regions. The main sources of such mobility, as we may find from Table 2, were agriculture and trade.

Table 2

Caste	Sources of income	Regional distribution of dominant families
<i>Agrarian Castes</i>		
Sadgop	Agriculture and Trade	Burdwan, Midnapur, Birbhum, Hooghly, Bankura, 24-Parganas, Mymensingh.
Chasi Kaibartta (Mahishya)	Agriculture	Midnapur, Burdwan, Hooghly, Nadia, 24-Parganas, Faridpur.
Aguri	Agriculture	Burdwan, Hooghly, Nadia, 24-Parganas, Faridpur.
<i>Trading Castes</i>		
Tili	Trade, Moneylending and Agriculture	Murshidabad, Nadia, Burdwan, Midnapur, Hooghly, Bankura,

Caste	Sources of income	Regional distribution of dominant families
		Birbhum, 24-Parganas, Dacca, Bakarganj, Mymensingh, Chittagong.
Saha	Trade, Moneylending and Agriculture	Midnapur, Burdwan, Birbhum, 24-Parganas, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Noakhali.
Subarnabanik	Trade, Moneylending and Agriculture	24-Parganas, Hooghly, Burdwan, Nadia, Midnapur, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh.
Tambulbanik	Trade, Moneylending and Agriculture	Hooghly, Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Nadia, Jessore, Bakarganj, Mymensingh, Chittagong.
<i>Castes with moderate progress</i>		
Modak or Mayra	Trade and Agriculture	24-Parganas, Nadia, Hooghly.
Rajbansi	Agriculture and other professions	Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Dinajpur.
Chasadhoba	Trade, Moneylending and Agriculture	24-Parganas, Jessore, Nadia, Hooghly.
Jogi	Agriculture and other professions	Scattered
Namasudra	Agriculture	Faridpur, Bakarganj, Khulna, Jessore.
Pod	Agriculture	Scattered

*Source :* This table has been prepared on the basis of information collected from W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vols. I-VI, Sections on caste; *Bengal District Census Reports*, 1891 and also H.H. Risley, *op. cit.*, Vols. I & II.

Among the agrarian castes mentioned in Table 2, the Sadgops had colonised the jungle areas of south-western Bengal and thereby had established themselves as a dominant agricultural caste in Burdwan and the surrounding region by the middle of the seventeenth century and enjoyed this position till the rise of the Burdwan Raj. But their power and influence could not be totally destroyed and even after the Permanent Settlement they continued as dominant landholding elites at the village level, sometimes enjoying lower grade tenures in a chain

of sub-incidentary *patni taluks*. In other districts also some of their caste members had become either prosperous *zamindars* or substantial landowning peasants.<sup>31</sup> Many of them had also taken to trade and some, like Ramchandra Roy, had made fortunes as agents of the European merchants in the eighteenth century. By 1911, about 27 per cent of the Sadgop earners were engaged in trade and many of them, as was claimed in their first provincial conference in 1928, were fairly wealthy.<sup>32</sup> The Chasi Kaibarttas had also reclaimed the culturable wastelands in eastern and southern parts of Midnapur and thus secured for themselves, during the days of the Mughal *faujdars*, a dominant position in the agrarian economy of the region, filling up all the strata in the agrarian structure, from big *zamindars* down to agricultural labourers. After the Permanent Settlement, while the big *zamindari* houses crumbled, their rich Kaibartta tenants parcelled out among themselves the territory of their masters. In the neighbouring districts as well, like Burdwan, Hooghly, Nadia and the 24-Parganas or in the eastern areas like Faridpur, they enjoyed an important position in agriculture, some of them being substantial landholders, grain-dealers and peasant-proprietors.<sup>33</sup> The Aguris were also a dominant agrarian caste in some areas of Burdwan and continued even after the Permanent Settlement as land holders and rich peasants controlling land in their localities and often consolidating their position further by securing lower grades of *patni taluks*. In the neighbouring districts of Hooghly, Nadia and Midnapur, they were mostly engaged in agriculture and were "fairly well off."<sup>34</sup>

Trade and moneylending, on the otherhand, became sources of mobility for the Tilis, Sahas, Subarnabaniks, Gandhabaniks and Tambulibaniks. In many cases, however, profits from business were invested in purchasing *zamindari* rights. The process had started before the battle of Plassey when a number of people of such trading castes acted as *banians* or agents and middlemen for the East India Company's servants and British free merchants, and played a vital role in British private trade transactions. With the development of the agency houses by the end of the eighteenth century, they were confined to a more restricted role. But in the meantime many of them had established themselves as influential traders and landowners of substance. And thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in many parts of Bengal, we find a number of well-to-do traders, moneylenders, *zamindars* and tenureholders belonging to these newly prosperous trading castes.<sup>35</sup>

To cite some examples of mobility through trade, for the dissident Tilis, silk and salt trade had been the two important sources of individual mobility. Krishnakanta Nandi, son of a peasant from south-west Burdwan, initially made money in silk trade and later also branched off to manufacture and trade in salt. For the two Pal families of Daspur (Midnapur) and Kalyanpur (Howrah), silk trade was the source of prosperity, while for the Rays of Bhagyakul (Dacca), the Pal-Chaudhuris of Ranaghat (Nadia) and the Deys of Srirampur (Hooghly) affluence came through trade in salt. Many of them later expanded their economic activities to other areas, but most notable was their interest in purchasing *zamindari* estates, sub-infeudatory tenures and revenue-farming rights. Some of them, like the Rays of Bhagyakul or the Kundu Chaudhuris of Mahiari (Howrah) received the title of Raja, while the Nandis (Krishnakanta) of Kasimbazar got the higher title of Maharaja. And apart from these magnates, there were also other lesser families who had made money through various kinds of trade, invested in purchasing cultivable land and combined with it the lucrative trade of moneylending.<sup>36</sup> Among the Subarnabaniks, a number of people, like Nayan Chand Mullick, Nemai Charan Mullick and Mathura Mohan Sen in the eighteenth century and Advaita Addhya or Jadulal Mullick in the nineteenth had made fortunes through moneylending and banking. Some of them later diversified their activities, participated in various other forms of trade and invested in landed properties. On the other hand, some of the very important Subarnabanik trading magnates, like the legendary Gauri Sen in the eighteenth century or Motilal Seal, Sagarlal Datta and Prankrishna Laha in the nineteenth, had started their careers as *banians* or agents of the European merchants operating in Bengal. Motilal subsequently switched off to independent inland trade in indigo, rice and sugar, extended his activities later to overseas trade and shipping and ultimately ended up as an important *zamindar* in Calcutta. Similarly, Sagarlal Datta had also become successful in his independent ventures, first in indigo trade and then in jute, while Devendralai Mullick made enormous profits from his investments in tea trade.<sup>37</sup>

The other castes, like Mayra, Rajbansi, Chasadhoba, Jogi, Namasudra and Pod, could not rise to similar heights as achieved by those mentioned above. Nevertheless, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in different districts of Bengal, many of their members, compared to their earlier position, had attained better economic standards through cultivation, landholding, moneylending, trade and other mis-

cellaneous professions.<sup>38</sup> Particularly spectacular was the rise of the two peasant communities: the Namasudras in the east and the Rajbansis in the northern districts of Bengal. In 1911, about 78 per cent of the actual Namasudra earners were engaged in agriculture and of them 95.71 per cent were 'cultivators', the majority of whom were tenant farmers and a few were sharecroppers or *bargadars*, whose number increased towards the end of the 1920's. But on the other hand, a good many of them had become substantial peasants and 'rent-receivers', by taking advantage of the process of reclamation that had started in the region since the mid-nineteenth century. Later on, with land-owning, some of them also combined moneylending and trade and moved further up the economic ladder.<sup>39</sup> The Rajbansis also took advantage of the reclamation of the jungle areas in northern Bengal in the nineteenth century. In 1911, about 89 per cent of them were 'cultivators', of whom many were sharecroppers or *adhiars*. But some of them had also become rich peasants as *Jotdars* or *Chukanidars*, while a few had become fairly big *zamindars*, like the Raikat family of Jalpaiguri.<sup>40</sup>

Thus through trade and agriculture a considerable number of enterprising individuals belonging to some of the lower castes had moved up in economic dimension vis-a-vis their caste neighbours. The process, which has been described by a contemporary observer as "upward economic movement and consequent social differentiation,"<sup>41</sup> had started long before the coming of the British. But with the establishment of the British administration in Bengal, some other new opportunities for social mobility also came in their way in the shape of western education and new professions. The question of disseminating English education began to receive more and more attention in the early nineteenth century when the East India Company decided to Indianize certain branches of administration. In 1823, a Committee of Public Instruction was appointed by the Bengal Government for the purpose. And a resolution of the Governor-General in Council in March 1835 laid down the basic objective of the British education policy as to promote "European literature and science among the natives of India".<sup>42</sup> The British plan of education was based on the concept of freedom of opportunity; as C.E. Trevelyan put it, its object was "to promote the extension, not the monopoly of learning".<sup>43</sup> The establishment of the university system in 1857 led to further spread of education, although much more importance was now attached to vernacular education. As a result, the field of education, which was ini-

tially an exclusive monopoly of the higher castes like Brahman, Kayastha and Baidya, was increasingly invaded, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, by the ambitious members of the ritually low castes. As it becomes evident from the census statistics of 1891, their position in this field was not that miserable as it is often supposed, though, of course, they were decisively lagging behind those three upper castes who were the first to take advantage of western education.<sup>44</sup> In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, these enterprising low caste people had made further progress both in matters of general literacy and literacy in English. This trend would become more than apparent from Table 3, prepared on the basis of census data for the years 1901 and 1911.

Table 3

Caste	Percentage of Literacy		Percentage of Literacy in English	
	1901	1911	1901	1911
Baidya	45.6	53.2	15.85	20.88
Brahman	35.8	39.9	8.19	10.90
Subarnabanik	32.3	45.1	15.14	21.87
Gandhabanik	31.8	31.4	10.18	5.86
Kayastha	30.9	34.7	7.59	9.80
Sundi & Saha	20.8	14.9	1.07	1.84
Teli or Tili	16.3	16.3	1.27	1.93
Sadgop	13.9	14	1.65	1.86
Chasi Kaibartta	13	10.9	0.52	0.72
(Mahishya)				
Barui	12.9	15.3	1.26	1.80
Jogi	10.4	13	0.26	0.51
Kalu	10.3	10.7	0.31	0.31
Napit	9.8	11	0.61	0.87
Pod	9.4	14.1	0.15	0.31
Goala	6.3	7.7	0.39	0.65
Jalia Kaibartta	4.3	4.4	0.08	0.21
Namasudra	3.3	4.9	0.04	0.22

Source: *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.V, Part I, p.373, Subsidiary Table VI.

Table 3 shows a declining trend in the case of Chasi Kaibartta, which

was "due to a number of Jalia Kaibarttas returning themselves as Chasi..."<sup>45</sup> The figure for literacy among the Sundis also exhibit a similar trend, but it has been balanced off by the corresponding figures for literacy in English which show an upward tendency. The decline of the Gandhabaniks is, however, inexplicable, though in 1901 they were placed well above the Kayasthas. But the most significant fact that emerges from the table is that many of the lower castes had literacy rates higher than the provincial average (7.7% in 1911).

However, the whole development had another interesting dimension which is worth noting here. During these years, the different dissident groups, the ambitious Sahas or Chasi Kaibarttas, Tilis or Sadgops, were moving gradually further up, at least in the matter of education, than the members of their original parent castes. The Sahas in 1901 could boast of more than 354 literates per 1000 of their caste population, the proportion being much higher than that among the ordinary Sundis. Similarly, the Chasi Kaibarttas, with one male in three who could read and write, sought to dissociate themselves from the Jalia Kaibarttas, who could boast of only one in twelve; the Tilis with one in three from the Telis with only one in nine; and the Sadgops with one in four from the Goalas or Gops of Bengal Proper with only one in eight.<sup>46</sup> This gap went on increasing in the following years, the dissident groups having more initiative than their less prosperous parent bodies.

Education, at the same time, provided for further social mobility by opening up the gates to the world of new professions. And it is interesting to note the extent to which the lower castes were taking a place in this field. According to the census of 1911, the Namasudras could claim no less than 522 medical practitioners, and the Baruis 223 (some of them might have been quacks), while other low castes as Dhobas were also represented. Of the persons in educational posts, the Namasudras contributed 192, the Chasi Kaibarttas 245, the Sahas 214 and the Napits 168. Although higher government positions were monopolised by the upper castes, the lower castes were well-represented in subordinate employments.<sup>47</sup> In the twenties of the present century, their position improved further. As the census statistics of 1931 reveal (Table 4), they had been increasingly entering the government services, occupying both gazetted and non-gazetted posts, and adopting in large numbers such other higher professions, as law, medicine and teaching.



Table 4

<i>Castes</i>	<i>Number of persons in Govt. services (Gazetted and non-Gazetted)</i>	<i>Number of persons in other professions (Law, Medicine and Teaching)</i>
Mahishya	1,758	6,623
Goala	1,777	942
Namasudra	784	4,263
Napit	565	3,259
Jogi	363	1,857
Dhoba	237	444
Barui	231	1,123
Kamar	206	646

*Source: Census of India, 1931, Vol. V, Part II, pp.156-157, Imperial Tables XI.*

Thus in Bengal also, as in many other parts of India, the individual members of the same caste "played different economic roles of potentially differentiated ranks and varied accordingly in the evaluation or prestige dimension."<sup>48</sup> The recognised indices of prestige included the elegance of ceremonial performance and social services. Hitesranjan Sanyal has observed that the "immense proliferation of temple-building from the middle of the eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth was mainly due to the need of the emerging aspirants for social leadership who had been coming up in groups."<sup>49</sup> According to his calculation, between 1750 and 1850, 47.7 per cent of the founders of temples in Bengal belonged to the *Nabasakh*, intermediary, *ajal-chal* and *antyaja* castes. During the preceding fifty years, their proportion was 27.1 per cent and during the following fifty years it was 46.4 per cent.<sup>50</sup> As village life throughout the year revolved round the temple, this was a major step to validate their social eminence and also to acquire an establishment through which they could spread influence and build up a large clientele that gave them power in the local society. In addition to this, in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the lower caste *zamindars* and traders, in order to legitimise their newly acquired wealth, spent money for the establishment of educational institutions of both traditional and western models, made donations to hospitals and charitable dispensaries, constructed bathing *ghats*, dug up wells and ponds, made provisions for

free guest houses or *dharmasalas*, showed generous liberality to the poor, offered lucrative *Brahmottar* grants and other benefits to the Brahmans and performed their family ritual ceremonies in such splendour and extravagance that they often became subjects of local ballads.<sup>51</sup>

Many of such prosperous individuals, after the passing of the Local Self- Government Act in 1885, began to contest elections for getting into the Local and District Boards and Municipalities which thus became a new source of power for this emerging group of aspirant social leaders who were in search for wider recognition and larger following.<sup>52</sup> If we analyse the results of the first Local Board elections held in 1886 in different districts of Bengal, this trend becomes clear. In Burdwan, for example, of those who were elected to different Local Boards, more than 11 per cent were Aguri by caste, while Sadgops and Aguris together constituted a little more than 7 per cent of the total number of contestants.<sup>53</sup> The picture was far more clear in Midnapur. In Contai and Tamluk *thanas*, where the Mahishyas had a stronghold, about 50 per cent of the elected members in the former *thana* and a little more than 66 per cent in the latter belonged to the same caste, while in Midnapur district as a whole, out of a total of 62 elected members, so far as their caste can be determined from their surnames, 23 were undoubtedly Mahishyas.<sup>54</sup> The same story was true for the other mobile castes as well, although they did not enjoy an identically dominant position in any particular region. Among them, the newly prosperous *zamindars*, *talukdars*, tenure-holders, traders, moneylenders, pleaders and *muktars* were contesting elections in different parts of Bengal and were successfully getting through. Some such cases may be cited to illustrate this phenomenon. Monindra Nandi, representative of a Tili landowning family of repute, got the highest number of votes in Mongolcot thana in Burdwan.<sup>55</sup> Naran Pal, a *talukdar* and possibly Subarnabanik by caste, was elected from the Midnapur Sadar *thana*. Among the Sahas, Lakhi Narain Saha, a clerk in the Court of Ward emerged victorious from Danton in Midnapur,<sup>56</sup> Krishna Chandra Saha, the owner of a liquor shop, from Jagatballavpur in Howrah,<sup>57</sup> and Jogendra Narain Roy, a *zamindar* and a merchant, was elected from Nawabganj in the district of Dacca.<sup>58</sup> Similar examples are not difficult to find elsewhere, such as Gopi Krishna Rai, Ishan Chandra Halder, Raghuram Hazra, Benod Behari Mondal in Bankura,<sup>59</sup> Mukunda Lal Mondal in Birbhum,<sup>60</sup> Baroda Charan Das, Nitya Charan Das, Rasik Chandra Sikdar, Girish Chandra

Mondal, Rajendranath Haldar, Upendranath Shaw and Umesh Chandra Santra in the 24-Parganas.<sup>61</sup>

In many of these cases, caste-based personal following of the candidates accounted for their success which was much resented by the better educated high caste members of the local society. This becomes evident from the report of the Sub-divisional Officer of Diamond Harbour in the 24-Parganas, where two Chasi Kaibartas (Mahishya), Baroda Charan Das, a petty landholder with low educational attainments, and Nitya Charan Das, a *mukhtar* in the local *faujdari* court, were elected to the Local Board. As the officer reports:

"There is general dissatisfaction among the more educated members of the society in this sub-division at the election of the two candidates....

The voters were mostly chasas, belonging to the Kaibarta and Pode castes, and they voted under the influence of the candidates without a proper appreciation of the responsible duties which they, as members of the Local Board, will be called upon to perform...."<sup>62</sup>

All this evidence legitimately leads us to the hypothesis that the local influence, which these ambitious and prosperous lower caste individuals had acquired, was bringing them increasingly into these new forums, through which they tried further to consolidate and institutionalise their power and authority, and to rise thereby in social evaluation. The trend became much more prominently visible during the early twentieth century, as the Union Boards widened such opportunities at the village level since 1919. Quite often caste organisations and caste journals were used by such candidates for electioneering purposes, particularly to mobilize voters of their own caste.<sup>63</sup> As a result, around 1928-29, we find these groups more largely represented in the local bodies at all levels and in almost all the districts of Bengal. The Mahishyas dominated the scene in Midnapur, 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Howrah, Nadia, Murshidabad, Rajshahi and Rangpur; the Namasudras in Faridpur, Bakarganj, Jessore and Khulna; the Rajbansis in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Pabna. The Jalia Kaibartas got representation in Malda, Pods in the 24-Parganas and Khulna, while Muchis and Bagdis were represented in Nadia. Some of these elected representatives of the lower castes even adorned the posts of Presidents of different Municipalities as well as District and Union Boards.<sup>64</sup> And many of them used these institutions for the upliftment of their own communities. When Birendra Nath Sasmal became

the Chairman of the Midnapur District Board in 1923, it was not particularly liked by his non-Mahishya supporters, for they feared that his control over District and Local Board appointments and contracts would be turned to the advantage of only the members of his own Mahishya caste.<sup>65</sup>

#### IV

But in a society dominated by traditional values, the most important component of prestige was perhaps the caste ranking and individuals could rise in prestige dimension only if their castes could rise as corporations. So the changes in the distribution of productive resources and political power that altered the patterns of economic and secular social interaction between groups and individuals, often sought expression through attempts at achieving a higher ritual rank. Generally, the discrepancies between the secular status and the ritual rank of a particular caste were sought to be resolved through 'Sanskritization' or 'symbolic justification'. Most of these agitations for caste mobility, that we come across not only in Bengal but in other parts of India as well, during the early twentieth century, were in the shape of "attempt to change the group name to one more hallowed in Hinduism".<sup>66</sup> Following the general model, initially such reference group behaviour by different lower castes got expression through attempts to symbolize "a change in their rank by adopting a new label, or by prefixing or suffixing labels of other castes in census returns",<sup>67</sup> as in the cases of Sadgop, Tili, Madhunapit, Phulnapit, Mahishya, Satchasi, Rajbansi, Jogi or Namasudra. Then as printing and spread of education helped the dissemination of knowledge of a simplified and redefined classical Indian culture more widely, the reference group behaviour transcended the regional barriers and more frequently referred to the wider *varna* categories. Apart from a few castes referring to regional categories, most of the caste mobility movements, recorded in the Census Reports and known from the wide variety of caste literature, sought three types of *varna*-affiliations, Brahmanic, Kshatriya and Vaisya, the three twice-born *varnas* of the classics. Each of these castes resorted to some origin myth which associated them with one or the other of these *varnas*, and quoted Puranic *slokas*, sometimes spurious and sometimes incomplete, in support of these claims. Their pretensions were later validated through securing *vyavasthas* (reli-

gious judgements) from the Nabadwip *pundits* whose decisions were allegedly influenced by the present secular status of the caste concerned.<sup>68</sup>

Table 5

<i>Castes</i>	<i>Reference category</i>
Namasudra	Brahman
Jogi	Brahman
Kamar	Brahman (a 1931 claim, their 1921 claim being Kshatriya, and 1911 claim Vaisya)
Napit	Brahman (a 1931 claim, their 1921 claim being Baidya, and 1911 claim Kshatriya)
Baidya	Ambastha(next to Brahman)
Kayastha	Kshatriya
Aguri	Kshatriya (Ugra Kshatriya)
Mahishya	Kshatriya (1931 claim, their 1901 claim being Vaisya)
Gonla	Yadava (Kshatriya) (a 1931 claim, the earlier claim being Sadgop)
Sundi	Kshatriya or Saundik Kshatriya (a 1931 claim, the earlier claim being Saha)
Rajbansi	Kshatriya (a 1911 claim, their earlier claim being Bhanga or Bratya Kshatriya)
Pod or Padmaraj	Bratya Kshatriya (fallen Kshatriya) or Paundra Kshatriya
Sadgop	Vaisya
Tili	Vaisya
Gandhabanik	Vaisya
Tambulibanik	Vaisya
Barui	Vaisya
Tanti	Vaisya
Subarnabanik	Vaisya
Saha	Vaisya
Mayra or Modak	Kayastha
Jalia Kaibartta	Mahishya
Chasadhoba	Vaisya (a 1911 claim, their earlier claim being Sadgop)
Kalu	Teli

Source: *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.V, Part I, p.441; *Census of India*, 1921, Vol.V, Part I, p.347; *Census of India* 1931, Vol.V, Part I, pp.427-428.

The nature of such claims, however, depended on the original position of the castes in regional hierarchy, their source of income and the extent of education among the members of particular castes. The

tabular statement (Table 5) of such claims of some of the important castes reveals these features more adequately. A great majority of the ambitious Sudra castes, as it appears, sought a Vaisya status on the basis of their present occupations, namely agriculture and trade, which were also the traditional occupations of the Vaisyas of the Vedic times.<sup>69</sup> The two other Sudra castes of Bengal, the Baidyas and the Kayasthas, who were traditionally assigned a relatively higher rank in the regional hierarchy,<sup>70</sup> claimed to be associated with the Ambasthas (with a rank next to that of the Brahmans) and the Kshatriyas respectively,<sup>71</sup> while the demand of the Aguris to be known as Ugra Kshatriya was fairly an old one.<sup>72</sup> The most vigorous of all agitations that arose on caste question was perhaps that of a section of the Chasi Kaibartas who wanted to be designated as Mahishya, a respectable mixed caste of ancient India, that descended from the *anuloma* marriage between a Kshatriya father and Vaisya mother. *Anuloma* marriage having the sanction of religion, they were allowed to pursue the occupations of their mother and on that basis, the 'Presidency Mahishya Samiti' at the time of the census of 1901 claimed a Vaisya status and submitted the opinions of the leading *pundits* of Bengal and Orissa, supported by quotations from *Puranas* and *Samhitas* bearing on the subject. In 1931, however, they claimed to be Kshatriya, the *varna* status of their supposed ancestor.<sup>73</sup> The Goalas and Sundis initially referred to regional categories and sought to be associated with their more prosperous dissident groups, Sadgops and Sahas respectively. But from 1923 the Goalas began to put forward an interesting claim to be returned as Yadava, the family name of Sri Krishna, implying thereby a claim to Kshatriya status.<sup>74</sup> The Sundis on the other hand claimed to be Kshatriyas, or more precisely Saundik Kshatriyas.<sup>75</sup> The groups that were seeking association with the regional castes, it should be noted here, were those who were most backward in education (see Table 3). Among them, the Jalia Kaibartas were seeking equality with the Mahishyas,<sup>76</sup> who had recently moved up in social estimation. The oil-pressing Kalus took advantage of the similarity of their occupation with that of the Telis and increasingly appropriated their caste name.<sup>77</sup> The Chasadhobas, who had assumed the name of Satchasi, initially referred to the regional category of Sadgop. But before the census of 1911, their 'Hitaishini Sabha' claimed a Vaisya status.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, those who were coming from the bottom of the ritual hierarchy sought affiliation to

the highest of the *varna* categories. The 'Jogi Hitaishini Sabha' of Calcutta in a petition to the Census Commissioner in 1901 claimed a Brahman status.<sup>79</sup> Similarly the Namasudras also claimed to be Brahmans and procured *vyavasthas* to that effect.<sup>80</sup> The Rajbansis who wanted to be dissociated from the Kochs, described themselves as Bratya (fallen) Kshatriyas in 1891. Prior to the census of 1911, however, they began to boast of a pure Kshatriya origin and secured the opinion of the Nabadwip *pundits* to validate that claim.<sup>81</sup> The Pods, since 1901, also wanted to be recognised as Bratya Kshatriyas and quoted *slokas* from *Manusamhita* and *Parasuramasamhita* in support of that contention.<sup>82</sup>

Reference group behaviour does not only mean seeking a particular *varna*-affiliation, but also appropriating the social and ritual norms of those twice born *varnas*, if not in the classical form, at least in accordance with the local tradition. In Bengal, in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, we find an increasing number of lower castes adopting the *sanskaras* or social beliefs and ritual ceremonies that had once been peculiar to the higher *varnas* and following social practices that had been the hallmarks of the respectable castes enjoying a higher position in the regional caste hierarchy. For example, the Baidyas, the Kayasthas, the Aguris, a section of the Tilis, the Subarnabaniks, the Rajbansis and the Jogis had started wearing sacred thread, while the Aguris, a section of the Sadgops and the Mayras introduced 'Kulinism' with all its ancillary taboos and customs.<sup>83</sup> For the Rajbansis, the sacred thread had in fact become a symbol round which a lot of social mobilization actually took place. In 1912, the 'Kshatriya Samiti' organised its first mass thread-wearing ceremony, called the *milan-kshetra*, at Bhogramguri in Rangpur district, where four to five thousand Rajbansis went through the ceremony of ritual rebirth. This was followed by many other such *milan-kshetras* organised in different districts, resulting in "lakhs" of Rajbansis donning the sacred thread as a mark of their Kshatriya or twice-born status.<sup>84</sup> In the same fashion, in 1918-19 the Subarnabaniks also organised in Calcutta and in the districts a number of *Upanayana Yajnas*, where "thousands" of their caste members went through the ritual rebirth to assert their twice-born Vaisya status.<sup>85</sup> Apart from this, a number of ambitious castes also began to reduce the period of *asauch* or ceremonial uncleanness after bereavement from 30 to 10, 12 or 15 days, as were prescribed for the three twice-born *varnas* in order of precedence.<sup>86</sup> Some of these lower castes also decided to relinquish surnames that

might betray their Sudra origin, such as 'Das' which literally meant servant. Instead of this, they either began to adopt more respectable ones, like 'Ray' which did not indicate any caste status, and 'Devi' for their womenfolk, in the same fashion as the Brahman ladies, or preferred such titles which would leave no room for doubt as to the caste status of an individual, such as Kundu in the case of Tilis.<sup>87</sup> As regards food and drink, the habit of eating impure food like beef, pork and fowl, drinking of wine and smoking of tobacco were increasingly falling into disrepute. Social segregation of castes and sub-castes was being far more strictly observed, violations leading to social ostracism. And if the higher castes had become a little liberal in this respect, the lower castes chose to be far more strict.<sup>88</sup>

Cultural adaptation was, however, more palpable in the marriage customs of these pretentious castes and in their practices concerning women. In other words, the lower orders of society now increasingly began to appropriate the patterns of gender relations prevalent so long in the upper strata. Ceremonies necessary to regularize marriage and adoption as well as prevention of marriage within the same *gotra*, and the prohibition of divorce, as were practised by the ritually higher castes, were being increasingly adopted by these ambitious castes seeking equal social status with these higher categories.<sup>89</sup> In Bengal, as in many other areas of the sub-continent, the castes which forbade widow-remarriage and whose widows either performed *sati* or at least observed *jatyachar* or ascetism, usually enjoyed a higher ritual status than those who did not observe these customs. As a result, from the early nineteenth century, a number of lower castes began to adopt the customs concerning widows. According to an estimate, in 1815-16, 45 per cent of the widows burnt in Bengal Proper came from the lower social groups, especially the up-and-pushing Sadgops, Telis, Kaibartas, Goalas, Namasudras, Sahas and Aguris.<sup>90</sup> This was more or less a continuing trend, as a recent study shows, between 1815 and 1827 in more than 42 per cent of the *sati* cases in Bengal, families involved belonged to castes other than the three traditional higher castes, the Brahman, Kayastha and Baidya.<sup>91</sup> Later in 1829 *sati* was abolished but widow-remarriage remained strictly proscribed, both among the higher and the lower castes. And those who formerly allowed this practice, began to prohibit it in the hope of achieving social respectability. The 1891 census list of castes that forbade widow-remarriage included the Banias, Sadgops, Sundis, Kaibartas, Telis, Mayras and Napits. On the other hand, the Namasudras, although permitted this



practice earlier, began to discontinue it towards the turn of the century.<sup>92</sup>

Child-marriage was another such social custom of the respectable castes. Although in the later nineteenth century (between 1881 and 1901) there was a marginal decline (only 1.8 per cent) in the rate of infant girls (under ten years of age) getting married,<sup>93</sup> the available statistics show that while the better educated upper castes were abandoning this custom, the socially ambitious lower castes were increasingly borrowing it. According to a table prepared by Ramkrishna Mukerjee, a little more than 33 per cent of the castes and tribes of Bengal practised only child-marriage in the late nineteenth century.<sup>94</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth, if we compare the 1911 census statistics (Table 6), we will find that in this direction the lower castes were going far ahead of the traditional higher castes of Bengal, such as Brahman, Kayastha and Baidya.

Table 6

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Percentage of married women and widows among the females of each caste in the age-group of 5-12</i>
Baidya	5.1%
Kayastha	8.8%
Subarnabanik	11.1%
Rajbansi	15.2%
Brahman	16.0%
Gandhabanik	16.3%
Jalia Kaibartta	18.3%
Namasudra	22.2%
Kamar	23.3%
Chasi Kaibartta	25.9%
Sundi or Saha	28.2%
Sadgop	29.3%
Teli and Tili	32.2%
Goala	32.7%
Pod	35.7%

Source: *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.V, Part I, pp.351-355, Subsidiary Table V.

In the following decade the custom slowly began to lose in popularity also among the ambitious lower castes.<sup>95</sup> But this was due to another form of cultural adaptation. In the respectable marriage

arrangements among the higher castes, normally the bride's father used to present money to the bridegroom, while among the lower castes the practice was just the reverse, i.e., the bridegroom had to pay a bride-price. But from the second half of the nineteenth century, the respectable and well-to-do members of such ambitious castes as Aguri, Sadgop, Tili, Mahishya and Rajbansi, began to imitate their betters and gave money to the father of the bridegroom. The amount of dowry went on rapidly increasing with the usual result that the girls remained unmarried until a comparatively late age.<sup>96</sup> And by the second decade of the twentieth century, this practice had become "almost universally prevalent."<sup>97</sup>

Along with these marriage customs of the higher castes, seclusion of women both before and after marriage was also being more enthusiastically enforced by these aspirants for social respectability. Although a small section, better educated and more prosperous had started relaxing the rigours of the *purdah* system during the early twentieth century, the middle and lower castes, both in towns and villages, began to enforce it among themselves more vigorously than ever.<sup>98</sup> The Namasudra women, as mentioned earlier, were forbidden to visit market places since 1872. Similarly, the Rajbansis, in the early twentieth century, began to confine their women behind the *purdah*, as a mark of social respectability.<sup>99</sup>

It is, however, interesting to note that although 'Sanskritization' was the dominant trend, it was not certainly the only one. Parallel to this, signs of 'Westernization' or secularization were also visible in the behaviour of these mobile caste groups. Their goal remained the same, only their reference category now was educated liberal *bhadralok*, instead of one of the three classical *varnas*. The Karmakars, Sadgops, Tilis, Gandhabaniks, Subarnabaniks, Mayras, Jogis, Yadavas (Goalas) and the Namasudras thus tried to remove the social barriers between sub-castes, either by promoting intermarriages or by insisting upon a claim of common origin.<sup>100</sup> In addition to that, certain sections of the Tilis, Sadgops, Baruis, Subarnabaniks, Gandhabaniks, Jogis, Rajbansis and Namasudras tried to build up opinion against child-marriage and sought to promote widow-remarriage, at least in the case of minors, while the more progressives among the Jogis and Sadgops actually succeeded in arranging a few marriages for such widows.<sup>101</sup> Many of the Mahishyas, Tilis, Sahas, Sadgops, Yadavas, Mayras and Rajbansis were also vocal against dowry system.<sup>102</sup> The rate of child-marriage, as we have seen in Table 6, was already remarkably low

among the Subarnabaniks. In 1878 they had formed the 'Saptagram-  
iya Subarnabanik Hitasadhani Sabha' with Rajendra Mullick as its  
President. Its sole purpose was to eliminate dowry system from their  
community and in its first meeting, 1064 people had signed a pledge  
to refrain from paying or demanding dowry while arranging marriage  
for their wards. The 'Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani' had its first  
session in April 1916 at the Calcutta residence of Rajendra Mullick.  
Here also the issue was referred to and its importance was adequately  
stressed.<sup>103</sup> But apart from all these endeavours, at least in one  
respect this Westernizing trend was shared more or less by all the ambi-  
tious castes of Bengal; this was expressed in their awareness that edu-  
cation and particularly English and professional education was  
necessary for achieving social respectability.<sup>104</sup>

## V

But a caste did not exist by itself. It could only be "recognized in con-  
trast to other castes with which its members are closely involved in  
a network of economic, political and ritual relationship."<sup>105</sup> Hence  
caste ranking was necessarily 'interactional' rather than purely 'attri-  
butional'.<sup>106</sup> A caste could move up in ritual hierarchy only if the  
other members of society acknowledged their higher pretensions. So  
the real touchstone by which we can decide whether a caste had really  
moved up in the scale of social precedence is not merely the opinion  
of the Hindu pendency but general Hindu public opinion. And judg-  
ing by this standard, it must be said in the light of the available evi-  
dence, that although mobility in secular context was possible, if not  
easy, that in ritual context was difficult and rare.

In Bengal, it is true as O'Malley had observed in 1917, "the social  
structure.... (was) not so rigid and inflexible as elsewhere". Many of  
the so-called untouchables occupied a very low place in the hierarchy  
of castes, but held their own in public life and were in fact under no  
disabilities so far as public facilities were concerned.<sup>107</sup> The new edu-  
cation, it is often believed, had a corrosive impact on caste system, as  
the liberal ideas inculcated through it questioned many of the fun-  
damental assumptions on which rested the traditional society. The old  
customs, institutions, ideas and beliefs were brought before the light  
of reason. This new rationalism grew up in close association with west-  
ern humanism with its novel demand for the rights of man. As a result,  
there was now, as a foreign observer noted in the late nineteenth cen-

tury, a growing "consensus of opinion" among the educated communities against "social evils founded upon religious ordinances and upon deep rooted ideas and prejudices."<sup>108</sup> Educated Indians, more socially conscious now, were no longer prepared to admit the superiority of their neighbours only because they belonged to a higher caste through an accident of birth. Moreover, as urbanisation made progress, city life became incompatible with the observance of caste customs, as there were now other more important secular levels of interaction. Men of different castes had to work together in offices, mills and mines and live in the same localities sharing the same civic facilities. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, all types of castes, including even the Brahmans, were going to work at the mills and had no objection to working together. Even the old prejudices about living together in mill lines were being thrown off and new mills with good lines were now more popular and attractive.<sup>109</sup> Apart from this, "the adjuncts of modern civilisation, railway trains, trams and motor omnibuses" had "a similar effect" of relaxing the bonds of caste.<sup>110</sup> The result was, as an early twentieth century Bengali observer noted, the rules of caste became less rigorous in the cities which knew "fewer social bonds".<sup>111</sup> And as a reflection of this liberal attitude we find in Bengal since the mid-nineteenth century, the emergence of a number of organisations, operating mainly in the urban areas, like the Brahmo Samaj, the Hindu Mission, the Hindu Sabha, the Bengal Hindu Samaj Sammilani, the Yongman's Literary Society and the Jat Pat Todak Mandal, which advocated the abolition of caste.<sup>112</sup> This situation had prompted Sitanath Ray, a leader of the Tilis, to announce with pride in the meeting of the Indian Legislative Council on 16 March 1916, that "there is no such rigid distinction—an insurmountable barrier — between the depressed classes and the higher class of Hindus in Bengal as is supposed to exist in the Madras Presidency.... education had already done much to uplift the depressed classes in Bengal and to remove the marks of inequality which distinguish the depressed from the higher classes." Yet, he could not deny the fact that "society, I mean the orthodox Hindu society, is not yet so advanced as to yield to the influence of the leaders of the educated community."<sup>113</sup>

But what Ray did not mention, or had perhaps failed to see like many of his contemporaries, was that the educated community itself was beset with contradiction and ambivalence. There was no dearth of dissent at the intellectual level, but often it was fraught with ambi-

guties and tempered with absurd optimism. While untouchability was assailed, caste as a system of social differentiation was spared and, as a defence against the mounting challenge of the West, was even accepted and glorified as a part of India's great cultural heritage. In the nineteenth century, men like Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay thought of caste as an institution that maintained social cohesion and prevented total degradation of the Indians against all the pernicious influences of the West. If Bankim was initially critical, he too gradually accepted this hierarchic system of stratification as a "wholesome and equitable arrangement".<sup>114</sup> The most influential figure in Bengal's religio-cultural life in the late nineteenth century was certainly Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Caste distinctions, he often used to tell his householder disciples, would naturally disappear through attainment of self-knowledge or love of God and that it would be unwise to dismantle them forcibly. Never, therefore, he made any frontal attack on the caste system and towards the end of his life even tacitly endorsed it through his personal conduct.<sup>115</sup> His most favourite disciple, Swami Vivekananda was up in arms against untouchability. "We are neither Vedantists, ... nor Pauranikas, nor Tantrikas," his famous statement goes, "we are just 'Dont-touchists'".<sup>116</sup> But he too considered caste system as "the most glorious social institution" of India, untouchability being only a later day aberration, arising out of the machinations of the blood-sucking priests.<sup>117</sup> His conceptualization of the problem, like that of his mentor, was entirely spiritual and so was his solution which, in practical terms, could hardly be realised or translated into action by the less enlightened masses. The ideal caste system of the past, he believed, was based on *guna* or qualities and not on birth or heredity. So he did "not propose any levelling of caste", but wanted to "raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin" through the attainment of "Brahmanya qualities".<sup>118</sup> This would not be difficult, he hoped, as "the Satya-Yuga will come when there will be one caste (Brahman), one Veda, and peace and harmony".<sup>119</sup> Later when his Ramakrishna Mission movement took shape and the Belur *math* rules were framed in 1899, he instructed his disciples not to turn the *math* into an ordinary temple, but to work with tireless zeal to feed the poor and raise the status of the outcastes. The Mission undertook in the early twentieth century a number of philanthropic projects for the distressed masses, either disease-stricken or famine-struck.<sup>120</sup> But hardly ever there was any definite programme focussed specifically on the question of removing untouchability.

The optimism about a natural withering away of caste under the influence of the modernising forces dominated, as we have already noticed, the thoughts of the Brahmo social reformer Shibnath Shastri,<sup>121</sup> and was shared, albeit in a different form and context, by the England-based Bengali Marxist R.P.Dutt.<sup>122</sup> Rabindranath was also vocal against untouchability and described it as a national sin and an obstacle to national progress.<sup>123</sup> But he failed to take note of the divisive implications of the caste based stratification system. On one occasion he condemned the *varna* system which assigned occupations on the basis of birth and thus ignored the natural propensities of individuals.<sup>124</sup> But elsewhere he hailed it for eliminating unhealthy competition that vitiated social relations in the West.<sup>125</sup> Even so far as untouchability was concerned, he could not initially visualise any reform within the existing socio-religious framework. In his famous dance-drama 'Chandalika', he had to take recourse to a Nepalese episode to bring in Ananda, a Buddhist monk, to preach the gospel of equality.<sup>126</sup> Later he lent his support to the untouchability removal programme launched by Gandhi.<sup>127</sup> But Gandhi himself, though against untouchability which he described as "our shame", was all in favour of *varnashrama dharma*, which he thought was based on a hereditary division of labour and did not imply any notion of inherited superiority.<sup>128</sup>

These ambivalence and ambiguities were also amply reflected in the behaviour of the larger Hindu society. On the one hand, men like Srikantha Sen, the Secretary of the Mymensingh Association, "confidently hoped" in the late nineteenth century "that the time honoured fabric of caste and priestcraft, with all its attendant evils, will entirely collapse in the course of two more decades."<sup>129</sup> In the early years of the twentieth century, some of the educated Bengalis were also arguing in favour of inter-caste marriage.<sup>130</sup> But simultaneously with all these liberal tendencies, conservatism also continued to deprave social relations. The members of the untouchable castes, although were freely admitted to schools and colleges, still faced difficulties in getting hostel accommodation. For, as Surendranath Banerjea acknowledged in a Council meeting in 1916, while "the higher caste students would perhaps live with them in the same hostel, they would not dine with them ..."<sup>131</sup> This humiliation sometimes motivated the young lower caste students to join the sectarian caste movements and resulted in their alienation from the cause of nationalism, as indicated by their complaints about the observance of comensality restrictions even in the

Congress sessions.<sup>132</sup> But even then the inter-caste dining movement that was set on foot in Bombay by Sir Narayan Chandravarkar was severely condemned in Bengal by a Calcutta daily (*Nayak*), because such movements, it was believed, by loosening the foundations of Hindu society would open a wide door to license.<sup>133</sup> It, therefore, does not seem surprising that when the Untouchability Abolition Bill was to be introduced in the Legislative Assembly in 1932, it was the two Hindu members of the Bengal Government, P.C.Mitter and B.P.Singh Roy, who urged that if possible, consent to the introduction of any bill of this kind should be withheld. Because the passage of such bills would be deeply resented by a large section of the Hindu community and would have disastrous consequences for Hinduism.<sup>134</sup> Two years later in 1934, when the Depressed Classes Status Bill, that proposed to give the 'depressed classes' the status of Sudras, came for a similar consideration, it was again B.P.Singh Roy who, along with Charu Chandra Ghosh (Revenue Member of the Executive Council), informed the Government that,

".... The laws of caste by which the Hindu society is governed were not king-made laws. They are supposed to have been derived from the Rishis and are considered to be divine laws enforced by royal sanction. So the right of the legislature to modify these laws in order to bring about a change in the constitution of the Hindu society is extremely doubtful....".<sup>135</sup>

When the educated community was so ambivalent in its attitude towards the caste system, it is easy to imagine the situation in the villages. Here, habitational segregation had not fallen into disuse even in the early twentieth century. As the Commissioner of the Dacca Division reported in 1909, there were "many villages where all people are of one caste and one social class...."<sup>136</sup> In villages, as it seems, therefore, opinion was conservative; conventions and customs were respected, violations leading to social ostracism. In this rural system of stratification what determined peoples' estimates of rank was still giving and receiving of pollution, especially through water, food and services.<sup>137</sup> The individual rank of a caste varied in proportion to the degree of pollution its members transmitted and its rank determined what kind of behaviour they could expect from the other segments of the society. In the nineteenth or the early twentieth century, this pattern of social interaction continued with no radical change whatsoever.

In their evidence before the Indian Statutory Commission, some

of the members of the untouchable castes in Bengal had complained that sometimes they were not allowed to take water from public wells or from tanks situated in the caste Hindu quarters, or if allowed, then only from a special corner. In 1928, an enquiry conducted by the Bengal Government revealed that the problem of untouchability and social segregation, although it was not that acute in this province as it had been elsewhere, was yet to disappear completely. In the district of Malda, for example, the untouchables in the rural areas were not allowed to use the public wells and had to wait nearby until a member of the higher castes was kind enough to draw water for them. In some parts of Murshidabad they were not allowed to draw water from *pucca* wells used by others, although in the Sadar Subdivision the restriction applied only to those public wells which were less than six feet in diameter. The same notion about the diameter of the well prevailed in Mymensingh and Burdwan and probably in many other districts as well. However, in most areas, as the District Officer of Burdwan observed, the orthodox people had been taking the disability upon themselves than throw it on others. In other words, instead of trying to prevent the low caste men from drawing water from *kutcha* or smaller *pucca* wells, they themselves abstained from using such sources of water.<sup>138</sup> But this was also a form of social segregation nonetheless. Although the more blatant forms of social disability and segregation had been disappearing rapidly in this province in the early twentieth century, there still remained a sizeable section of the population who used to pollute by their touch or presence.<sup>139</sup>

Moreover, in the eyes of many orthodox village Brahmans, the over-zealous guardians of the traditional social order, nothing at all seemed to have changed. Digindranarayan Bhattacharya, a nationalist social reformer who had started a personal crusade against caste system, analysed in 1931 the social and ritual behaviour of these Brahmans. As he exposed through an elaborate table, in the consciousness of the Brahmans everyone below their rank was a Sudra, therefore unclean, and hence deserved uniform despise.<sup>140</sup> This may not represent a universal picture. Yet, it shows that in the world of many, if not all, such omniscient Brahmans, everyone had been relegated to a subordinate category with gradations within it and there was no hope of a leap upward, since everyone was condemned by birth. And this attitude had a profound impact on the psychology of the rural masses, as to them, largely illiterate and ignorant, the village Brahman was still the only spiritual guide and the social leader whose



authority could not be questioned. Hence, social relations in the villages, as we can safely assume, largely followed the older pattern, with only patches of readjustment here and there. Contemporary literature also bears ample testimony to this unchanging nature of Hindu society in the Bengal countryside.<sup>141</sup>

## VI

As a result of this lack of change in the general consciousness of the people, the specific movements for social mobility also achieved very little success. In a secular context, in the case of the Chasi Kaibarttas, their new designation, Mahishya won general recognition, both social and official. Also successful were the Rajbansis and the Namasudras. But in none of these cases there was any major change in the ritual status.<sup>142</sup> And apart from these three castes, there seems to have been no other significant success arising out of such census-based caste agitations.

This lack of success was also because these movements were supported only by those people who had gained in wealth, education and influence.<sup>143</sup> Even the relatively more effective 'Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti' of the Rajbansis had only "about 300" members in 1912 and most of them were "middle class jotedars".<sup>144</sup> In the case of other associations the membership might have been even smaller. And against the activities of these small elite groups there was certainly no lack of dissent from within their own communities. The caste conferences that they organised in Calcutta from time to time were sneered at for not representing the voices from the countryside and the decisions arrived at there were not always regarded as binding. The associations which these people formed were also sometimes looked at with contempt and were considered to be conglomerations of self-seeking individuals, who had scant sympathies for their poor caste brethren.<sup>145</sup> In some cases again, rival associations were formed by the members of the same caste. In the case of the Tilis, for example, the 'Tilijati Sammilani', with its headquarter at Calcutta, was headed by the Maharaja of Kasimbazar and was supported by similar other landed magnates, while 'Tilijati Hitaishi Sabha', formed at Chander-nagore, was led by the wealthy merchant Harihar Seth and was patronised by other upwardly mobile traders and professionals from the mofussil towns. A considerable amount of mud-slinging also went on between the two organisations which tarnished their public image and

leaders had to lament the declining interest of their caste members in their activities.<sup>146</sup> Faction-fighting within the same organisation was also not rare and this further widened the credibility gap, with the result that the endeavours of these caste leaders could evoke only lukewarm response from the masses, particularly in the non-metropolitan areas.<sup>147</sup>

In other words, through these organised caste agitations only those who had improved their secular status had been demanding a lift in the ritual hierarchy. In many cases the lower sections of the respective communities remained unacquainted with their new designations and their intended connotations.<sup>148</sup> The movements, as a result, remained as attempts to bridge the gap between secular status and ritual rank or economic power and social prestige, but not to bring about any broader societal transformation or the upliftment of an entire community, except in a few cases, where an articulate caste consciousness and a spirit of protest pervaded through all the layers of the community, bringing about a horizontal solidarity that burst forth through organised mass-based movements. Where this mass base was lacking, such movements were considered to be "not of sufficient importance", and therefore, hardly worthy of cognisance.<sup>149</sup>

Moreover, although the very idea of organising an agitation for caste mobility challenged the ideology of caste ranking which was determined by birth and was immutable in the upward direction, only a few of the aspirant castes in the late nineteenth or the early twentieth century made any suggestion of social equality for all. Each individual community was striving to step upward in the social ladder; but it was equally insistent that those who stood below should be kept in their proper places.<sup>150</sup> Of course, there were important exceptions to this general rule and in this respect we may mention the Tilis, Jogis, Barujibis, Napits and the Namasudras who stood for complete social equality.<sup>151</sup> But on the whole, most of the other caste associations, while trying to retain the ritual hierarchy in its pristine form as expressed in the *varna* division of ancient India, wanted only a readjustment within that general framework. The phenomenon may perhaps be explained in terms of limited change in the material context of caste, which made the beneficiaries of that change much too concerned with their own little personal gains to think of a total overhauling of the structure. The link between material prosperity and higher ritual status had now become relatively thinner, but never completely severed. Caste continued to be an important factor contribut-

ing to social prestige, as the simple positive co-relation between secular and ritual status still had its relevance in popular mind. Changes in occupation in upward direction for the members of the lower castes thus merely served as a pretext to claim a higher ritual status which would bring them greater social respectability. The underlying assumption was perhaps that, an improvement in ritual status was a natural corollary to an improvement in material conditions. And this mobility in ritual hierarchy could be meaningful only if the other groups remained in their proper places. The methods of organising their movements for social mobility thus consciously endorsed the caste-based stratification system, although in a different context.

However, these movements during the colonial period also brought about a significant qualitative change in traditional society. A demand for higher ritual status by a number of lower castes at a time certainly threatened the hierarchical structure of society and signified, at least by implication, a protest against that stratification system. Appropriation of higher ritual symbols and respectable social customs by so many groups in the lower order of the society swept away the marks of distinction between the higher and the lower castes. They had now become more or less similar, so far as the patterns of their social behaviour were concerned. But this did not lead to a dissolution of caste as a social unit or to a levelling of the society. For caste now became more important in a secular context, determining the secondary group relations of the Bengali Hindus.

It was the limited nature of change in the material basis of the caste system that lay at the root of this process of secularisation of caste as a social category. The continued exclusion of the lower castes from social privileges, economic resources and political power, that still largely remained under the control of the high caste Hindus, and a growing consciousness about the situation due to limited mobility among the former, led to an articulation of caste sentiments in public life. This gradually transformed caste into a politically relevant category. In order to redress the existing social imbalances, many of the associations of such lower castes began to seek special favour from the Government in the form of reservation in legislative bodies, public employment and educational institutions — the new sinews of power. And more often now than ever, as we have already seen, they received generous patronage from the colonial authorities, trying to win over the loyalty of these backward sections of the Indian community as a counterpoise against the nationalists. Now in a corporate pluralist

society, protective discrimination in favour of the lower castes further encouraged structural pluralism and transformed a socio-cultural dichotomy into a conflict of political interests. As political rewards and economic opportunities were distributed on the basis of numerical strength and the depressed socio-economic conditions of certain castes, their members were compelled to stay within those groups for social as well as political identity. Caste thus became a focus for political mobilization and hence it was now more significant in a secular rather than ritual context. The colonial discourse of differentiation in this way gradually began to influence and determine the actual social relations among the Bengali Hindus.

## NOTES

1. M.N. Srinivas, 'Mobility in the Caste System', in Milton Singer and B.S. Cohn, (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, (Chicago, 1968), p.194.
2. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1981), pp.29, 58-59; 'Trends of change in the Bhakti Movement in Bengal', Occasional Paper No.76, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1985.
3. Ramakanta Chakravarti, *Vaishnavism in Bengal*, (Calcutta 1985), pp.321, 325, 328-335, 339-340; J.N. Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects*, (Second Edition, Calcutta, 1968) pp.160, 185-186, 195, 200-212, 280, 367-369.
4. H.Beveridge, *The District of Bakarganj: Its History and Statistics*, (London, 1876), pp.260-265; for further details, see Ramakanta Chakravarti, *op.cit.*, pp.352-384.
5. For details see, Sudhir Chakravarti, *Sahebghani Sampraday O Tader Gaan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1985); *Balahadi Sampraday Ar Tader Gaan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1986).
6. Jasimuddin, *Murshida Gaan*, (in Bengali), (Dacca, 1977), p.38.
7. C.S. Mead, *The Namasudras and Other Addresses*, (Adelaide, 1911), p.27.
8. Quoted in E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837*, (Cambridge, 1967), p.43.
9. *Ibid*, p.44.
10. Sitanath Biswas, *Jatutattva O Namasyakulodarpan*, (in Bengali), (Dacca, 1931), p.158.

11. W.L. Owen, Dist. Supdt. of Police to Magistrate of Faridpore, 18 March 1873, GB, Judicial, March 1873, Prog. No.179; also, Magistrate of Faridpur to the Commissioner, Dacca Division, 8 April 1873, GB, Judicial, May 1873, Prog. No.57.
12. Naresh Chandra Das, *Namasudra Sampraday O Bangladesh*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.), p.15; Mahananda Halder, *Sri Sri Guruchand Charit*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta 1943), pp.567-574; Paramananda Halder, *Matua Dharma Darshan*, (in Bengali), (Thakurnagar, 24-Parganas, 1393 B.S.), pp.89-92, 107-112, 129, 159, 164 and *passim*.
13. N.K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, (Calcutta, 1969), Vol.II, p.132.
14. Montgomery R. Martin, *History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, (London 1838), Vol.II, p.741; Upendranath Barman, *Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, (in Bengali), (Jalpaiguri, 1941), Vol.I, pp.1, 51, 52.
15. Sasthibhushan Nandi Barma, *Kayastha Puran*, (in Bengali), Second Edition, edited by Girishchandra Vidyalankar, (Calcutta, 1335 B.S.), p.339.
16. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.V, Part I, p.440.
17. GI, Home (Political), April 1911, Prog. No.20.
18. *Bengalee*, 2 October 1910.
19. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol.VI, Part I, pp.370, 379.
20. *Ibid*, pp.370, 394, 416; *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.V, Part I, p.441; *Census of India*, 1921, Vol.V, Part I, pp.347, 353.
21. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol.VI, Part I, p.380.
22. *Ibid*, p.372; W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, (Reprint, Delhi, 1973), Vol. I, p.68; David G. Mandelbaum, *Society in India*, (Indian Edition, Bombay, 1972), p.456.
23. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.372; *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.444; M.N.Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, (Indian Edition, Orient Longman, 1977), p. 97; David G.Mandelbaum, *op. cit.*, p.456; H.H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1981), Vol. I, p.491.
24. Rev. Andrew Warren, Principal, London Missionary College to Chief Secy., GB, 28 September 1910, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No. 10C-57, B October 1910, Progs. Nos. 96-100.
25. Mahananda Halder, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-258.

26. *Bengalee*, 2 October 1910.
27. J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, (Fourth Edition, Delhi, 1973), pp.51-52, 112-113.
28. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-44.
29. M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
30. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, (London, 1972), p.210.
31. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, pp.45-46, 83-96; Ratnalekha Ray, *Change in Bengal Agrarian Society, 1760-1850*, (New Delhi, 1979), pp.53, 89-90, 109-110, 132-133, 140, 148, 253; W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p.62, Vol. II, pp.53, 287, Vol. IV, pp.51, 225, Vol. V, p.404.
32. *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. V, Part I, Subsidiary Table IV, p.72; *Sadgop Patrika*, Paush 1335 B.S.
33. Sudhir Kumar Mitra, *Hooghly Zelar Itihas O Bangasamaj*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1962), Vol. I, p.46; Ratnalekha Ray, *op. cit.*, pp.53, 89, 131-173, 255; W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p.64, Vol. II, pp.47-48, Vol. III, p.288, Vol. V, p.287.
34. Ratnalekha Ray, *op. cit.*, pp.53, 89-90; W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.47, Vol. III, pp.54, 288.
35. *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. V, Part I, pp.445, 553; W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp.61, 68, 69, Vol. II, pp.47-48, 195, Vol. III, pp.47, 53, 55, 287-289, Vol. IV, pp.51-52, 225, 330, 332, Vol. V, pp.49, 191-192, 287, 404-406, Vol. VI, pp.145-146, 275; N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1965), Vol. I, pp.101-106; Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, pp.42-44, 48-49, 54-56.
36. For details, see, Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, pp.99-101.
37. Narendranath Laha, *Subarnabanik Katha O Kirti*, (in Bengali), Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1940), pp. 4-6, 121-122, 177-178; Rashbehari Mullick, *Vaisya Itihas*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1369 B.S.), pp.79-88, 92-94, 111-125, 165.
38. *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. V, Part I, pp.445, 553; W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p.64, Vol. II, p.47, Vol. III, p.289, Vol. V, p.406; H.H. Risley, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp.194, 499-500, Vol. II, p.177; *Report on the Census of the district of Faridpur*, 1891, p.13; *Report on the Census of the district of Khulna*, 1891, p.7; N.K. Bose, *op. cit.*, p.153; Ratnalekha Ray, *op. cit.*, pp.211, 255; Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, pp.41-43, 50, 55.
39. *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. V, Part II, pp.370-373, 379; for further details, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Social Protest or Politics of Backwardness—The Nam

asudra Movement in Bengal, 1872-1911', in Basudeb Chattopadhyay, *et al.*, (eds.), *Dissent and Consensus: Social Protest in Pre-Industrial Societies*, (Calcutta, 1989), pp.175-181.

40. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.574; Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibancharit*, (in Bengali), (Jalpaiguri, 1387 B.S.), p.9; Partha Chatterjee, *Bengal 1920-1947: The Land Question*, (Calcutta, 1984), pp.45-48; Sugata Bose, *Agrarian Bengal: Economy, Social Structure and Politics, 1919-1947*, (Cambridge, 1986), pp.12-15, 47; Swaraj Basu, 'Caste Mobility in Northern Bengal: A Study of the Rajbansi Movement in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, 1891-1921', Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, Calcutta University, 1986, pp.19-22.
41. Radhakamal Mukherji, 'Caste in Indian Economics', *Modern Review*, August 1912.
42. Quoted in B.B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes and their Growth in Modern Times*, (Delhi 1978), p.152.
43. Quoted in *ibid*, p.149.
44. *Census of India*, 1891, Vol. III, The Report, p.229, Table on Education by Caste.
45. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.360.
46. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.303.
47. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p. 553.
48. Barnard Barber, 'Social Mobility in Hindu India', in James Silverberg, (ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, (The Hague, 1968), p.19.
49. Hitesranjan Sanyal, 'Temple Building in Bengal from 15th to the 19th Century', in B. De, (ed), *Perspectives in Social Sciences, I, Historical Dimension*, (Delhi, 1977), p.134.
50. Hitesranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, *op. cit.*, Chapter II, Table No.1
51. Somendra Chandra Nandi, *Bandar Kasimbazar*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1978), pp. 141-143; Ratnalekha Ray, *op. cit.*, pp.259-264; *Mahishya Samaj*, Sraban 1318 B.S., Agrahayan, Paush, 1321 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Agrahayan, Paush, Magh-Falgun 1332 B.S.; Jaistha-Ashadh 1333 B.S.; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Chaturdas Barshik Karyabibaran*, (Jessore, 1915), pp.18, 61-65; *Purbabanga Vaisya Samitir Ashtambarshiya Karyabibarani*, (Calcutta, 1917), pp.10-11; Narendranath Laha, *op. cit.*, pp.7-18, 176, 178-183, 301-308, 379; Rashbehari Mullick, *op. cit.*, pp.81-82, 90-92, 98, 103, 106-109, 113, 119-121, 164, 166.

52. *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Chaitra-Baisakh 1333-34 B.S.; *Gandhabanik*, Magh 1330 B.S.
53. Magistrate of Burdwan to Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 14 September 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 3-20.
54. Offcg. Magistrate of Midnapur to Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 9 September 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 3-68.
55. Magistrate of Burdwan to Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 14 September 1886, *op. cit.*
56. Offcg. Magistrate of Midnapur to Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 9 September 1886, *op. cit.*
57. Offcg. Commissioner, Burdwan Division to Secy., GB, Municipal, 19 August 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 3-1.
58. Offcg. Magistrate of Dacca to Commissioner, Dacca Division, 5 August 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 6-13.
59. Notification by the Government of Bengal, Municipal Department, 3 August 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 3-55.
60. Offcg. Magistrate of Birbhoom to Commissioner, Burdwan Division, 16 June 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 3-36.
61. Offcg. Magistrate of the 24-Parganas to Commissioner, Presidency Division, 26 August 1886, GB, Municipal (Local Self-Government), December 1886, Colln. 4-15.
62. *Ibid.* Emphasis added.
63. *Gandhabanik*, Magh 1330 B.S.; *Kshatriya*, Paush 1331 B.S.; Rajani Kanta Das, *Bangiya Namasudra Conference*, (in Bengali), Bengal Namasudra Conference Committee, (Pirozpur, 1922), pp. 17-18, 23; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Ashtadas Barshik Karyabibaran*, (Jessore, 1920), p.57.
64. Reports of the District Officers and Divisional Commissioners, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No. 5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Prbgs. Nos. 7-20, Serial 3-16.
65. *Fortnightly Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the second half of July 1923.*
66. William L. Rowe, 'The New Cauhans: A Caste Mobility Movement in North India', in James Silverberg, *op. cit.*, p.66.



67. Y.B. Damle, 'Reference Group Theory with Regard to Mobility in Caste', in *ibid*, p.100.
68. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p. 440; texts of some of these *vyavasthas* may be found in Shyamacharan Sen Sarma, *Bangiya Baidyajati*, (in Bengali), (Chittagong, 1330 B.S.), pp. 96, 165-167; Gurucharan Mazumder, *Kayastha Kaustuv*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1282 B.S.), pp. 35-43; Sitikantha Smrititirtha, *Ugrakshatriya Samhita*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1300 B.S.), appendix; Surendra Nath Mazumder, *Rajguru Jogibansa ba Rudraja Brahmanjatir Bibaran*, (in Bengali), (Kachhar, 1334 B.S.), pp.207-212; also see, Girishchandra Basu, *Vyavasthapatramala*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta 1335 B.S.), *passim*.
69. Their claim was based on a simplistic logic : "These men are traders; the Vaisyas were traders; therefore they are Vaisyas", *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p.348; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Ashwin-Kartik 1332 B.S.; *Sadgop Patrika*, Jaistha 1338 B.S.; Sashibhusan Kundu, *Tilijatir Vaisyatva Praman*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1330 B.S.), p.10; Harekrishna Talukdar, *Vaisya Saha Jatir Itibritta*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta 1911), pp.15-20.
70. Niharranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas, Adi Parba*, (in Bengali), (Third Edition, Calcutta, 1980), Vol.I, pp.290-294.
71. Shyamlal Sen, *Ambastha Tattvakaumudi*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1323 B.S.), pp.1-47; Shyamacharan Sen Sarma, *op. cit.*, pp.83-139; Sashi Bhusan Nandi Barma, *op. cit.*, pp.59-62, 377; Girishchandra Basu, *Kayastha Samajer Sanskar*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta 1321 B.S.), pp.1-54; Gurucharan Mazumder, *op. cit.*, pp.1-34.
72. Sitikantha Smrititirtha, *op. cit.*, pp.30-48.
73. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.380; *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.441; *Mahishya Samaj*, Baisakh 1318 B.S.; GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10C-11, B October 1903, Prog. No.21, K.W., pp.1-4.
74. Nabinchandra Ghosh, *Jadubansa*, (in Bengali), (Kishoreganj, 1923), pp.168-177.
75. Narayan Chandra Saha, *Saundik Puran*, (in Bengali), (Ichhapur, 24-Parganas, 1830 Sakabda), *passim*.
76. *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p.347.
77. E.A. Gait, 'Caste', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Second Edition 1932, Vol. III, p.237.
78. GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10C-39, B July 1910, Progs. Nos.214-215, K.W., p.1.

79. GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10C-4, B September 1901, Progs. Nos.1-2, Abstract; also, see Sureshchandra Nath Mazumder, *op. cit.*, pp.1-85, 207-212; *Jogisakha*, Ashadh, Sraban 1327 B.S.
80. GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10C-4, B August 1901, Prog. No.1; also K.W., pp.1-2.
81. N.K. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p.137; Upendranath Barman, *Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, *op. cit.*, pp.4-6, 9.
82. An appeal to His Honour The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, from the Chairman, Secretary and Assistant Secretary, Rangilabad National Congress, 3.7.01, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.10C-57, B October 1910, Progs. Nos.96-100; also see Manindranath Mandal, *Arya Paundrak*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1317 B.S.), *passim*.
83. *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Agrahayan-Paush 1332 B.S.; *Modak Hitaishini*, Agrahayan, Paush 1336 B.S.; *Jogisakha*, Agrahayan 1315 B.S., Baisakh-Jaistha 1328 B.S.; Shyamacharan Sen Sarma, *op. cit.*, pp.6, 168; Girishchandra Basu, *op. cit.*, pp.78-85, 167-172; Sashibhushan Nandi Barma, *op. cit.*, pp.221, 339, 394, Saratchandra Biswas, *Sadgop Jati*, (in Bengali), (Chandernagore, 1328 B.S.) Third Part, pp.1-7; Sashibhushan Kundu, *op. cit.*, p.23; Sibchandra Sil, *Gaudi Subarnabanik*, (in Bengali), (Chinsurah, 1317 B.S.), p.53; Sitikantha Smriti tirtha, *op. cit.*, pp.65-68.
84. Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barma Jibancharit*, *op. cit.*, pp.21-23; *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, (in Bengali), (Jalpaiguri, 1397 B.S.), pp.46-47.
85. Rashbehari Mullick, *op. cit.*, pp.30-37.
86. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, p.425; *Mahishya Samaj*, Ashadh, Kartik, 1318 B.S., Ashwin-Kartik 1321 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Agrahayan-Paush 1332 B.S.; *Sadgop Patrika*, Bhadra 1337 B.S., Jaistha 1338 B.S.; Sashibhushan Nandi Barma, *op. cit.*, pp.236-239; Shyamlal Sen, *op. cit.*, pp.24, 47-51.
87. *Tilir Gaurab*, Falgun 1325 B.S., Baisakh 1331 B.S.; Harakishore Adhikari, *Rajbansi Kulopradip*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1314 B.S.), pp.97-99.
88. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, pp.356, 368.
89. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, p.425.
90. Rajat K. Ray, 'Introduction', in V.C. Joshi, (ed.), *Rammohan Ray and the Process of Modernisation in India*, (Delhi 1975), p.5.
91. Benoy Bhusan Roy, *Socio-Economic Impact of Sati in Bengal and the Role*

- of Raja Rammohan Roy*, (Calcutta, 1987), Tables 2 & 3, pp.148-152.
92. *Census of India*, 1891, Vol. III, The Report, p.267; *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.250; *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.321; H.H. Risley, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p.187; N.K. Bose, *op. cit.*, p.158; *Mahishya Samaj*, Ashadh 1318 B.S.
  93. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.260.
  94. Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, (Berlin, 1957), p.110.
  95. *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p.283, Subsidiary Table V.
  96. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, pp.251-255; *Mahishya Samaj*, Jaistha, Ashadh, Kartik, Magh, Chaitra 1321 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Chaitra-Baisakh 1332-33 B.S.; Jaistha-Ashadh 1333 B.S.; *Kshatriya*, Baisakh 1327 B.S., Ashadh, Paush, 1331 B.S., Sraban 1333 B.S.; Saratchandra Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp.47-62; *Gandhabanik*, Magh 1329 B.S., Kartik 1330 B.S.
  97. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, p.399.
  98. *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p.112.
  99. Chandreswar Ray, *Uttaranga Rajbansi Samajni*, (in Bengali), (1333 B.S.), pp.12-13.
  100. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.483; *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, p.466; *Jogisakha*, Magh 1331 B.S., Ashwin, 1338 B.S.; *Modak Hitaishini*, Paush 1338 B.S., Ashadh 1339 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Falgun 1333 B.S.; *Tilur Gaurab*, Magh 1325 B.S.; Raicharan Biswas, *Jatiya Jagaran*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta 1921), p.10; Nabinchandra Ghosh, *Gopjatir Kshatriyatva*, (in Bengali), (Mymensingh, 1331 B.S.), pp.59-60; Saratchandra Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp.12-15, 17-27; *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Magh 1327 B.S.; Abinaschandra Das, *Gandhabanik Jatir Prachin O Bartaman Abastha*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1330 B.S.), pp 36-50.
  101. L.S.S.O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers, Jessore*, (Calcutta, 1912), p.50; *Jogisakha*, Baisakh, Jaistha, Ashadh, Sraban 1312 B.S.; Paush 1315, B.S.; Agra-hayan 1327 B.S.; Dhadra, Paush 1330 B.S.; Jaistha 1331 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Chaitra-Baisakh 1332-33 B.S.; Magh-Falgun 1333 B.S.; *Kshatriya*, Chaitra 1332 B.S.; *Sadgop Patrika*, Sraban, Paush 1337 B.S.; Baisakh 1338 B.S.; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Chaturdas Barshik Karyabibaran*, *op. cit.*, p.55; Nabinchandra Ghosh, *Gopjatir Kshatriyatva*, *op. cit.*, p.60; *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Magh 1327 B.S.; Abinaschandra Das, *op. cit.*, p.52; *Gandhabanik*, Kartik, Agrahayan 1330 B.S.
  102. *Mahishya Samaj*, Jaistha, Ashadh, Chaitra 1321 B.S.; *Modak Hitaishini*, Kartik,

- Agrahayan 1336 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Chaitra-Baisakh 1332-33 B.S.; Jaistha-Ashadh 1333 B.S.; *Kshatriya*, Baisakh 1327 B.S.; Ashadh, Pansh 1331 B.S.; Sraban 1332 B.S.; *Jogisakha*, Jaistha 1328 B.S.; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Chaturdas Barshik Karya bibaran*, *op. cit.*, p.55; *Purbabanga Vaisya Samitir Ashtambarshiya Karyabibaran*, *op. cit.*, p.4; Saratchandra Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp.47-62; Nabinchandra Ghosh, *Gopjatir Kshatriyatva*, *op. cit.*, p.60; *Gandhabanik*, Kartik, Magh 1330 B.S.; *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Magh 1327 B.S.
103. Narendranath Laha, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, (Calcutta, 1941), pp.150-153.
104. *Mahishya Samaj*, Baisakh, Jaistha, Ashwin, Kartik 1318 B.S.; *Kshatriya*, Jaistha-Ashadh, Sraban-Bhadra 1327 B.S.; Baisakh, Sraban 1331 B.S.; *Sadgop Patrika*, Bhadra, Agrahayan 1337 B.S.; *Jogisakha*, Sraban, Bhadra 1313 B.S.; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Panchadas Barshik Karyabibaran*, (Jessore, 1916), pp.37-45; *Purbabanga Vaisya Samitir Ashtambarshiya Karyabibaran*, *op. cit.*, pp.4, 10-11; Nabinchandra Ghosh, *Gopjatir Kshatriyatva*, *op. cit.*, pp.2-3, 59; *Tilir Gaurab*, Magh, Chaitra 1325 B.S.; *Tili Bandhab*, Magh 1314 B.S.; *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Magh 1327 B.S.; Abinaschandra Das, *op. cit.*, pp.51, 53; *Gandhabanik*, Magh 1329 B.S., Magh, Chaitra 1330 B.S.
105. E.R. Leach, (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan*, (Cambridge, 1960), 'Introduction', p.5.
106. For a detailed discussion on these two aspects of caste-ranking, see Mckim Marriott, 'Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking', *Man In India*, Vol. XXXIX, No.2, 1959.
107. L.S. O'Malley, Secy., GB, General (Education), to Secy., GI, Home, 2 January 1917, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8 (1-2), January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17.
108. A. Smith, Commissioner, Presidency Division to Secy., GB, General, 23 April 1885, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.90-35, April 1886.
109. B. Foley, *Report on Labour in Bengal*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, (Calcutta, 1906), pp.11, 14, 16.
110. L.S.S.O'Malley, *Indian Caste Customs*, (Reprint, Calcutta 1976), p.165.
111. Prafullachandra Basu, *The Middle Class People in Calcutta*, (Calcutta, 1925), p.46.
112. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, pp.423-424; *Sambad Prabhakar*, 5 Sraban 1262 B.S., in Benoy Ghosh, *Samayik Patre Banglar Samajchitra*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta 1978), Vol. I, p.200.

113. 'Extract from the Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council', GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8 (1-2), January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17.
114. Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, (Delhi 1988), pp.62, 70, 152.
115. John Roselli, 'Sri Ramakrishna and the educated elite of late nineteenth century Bengal', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, Vol. 12, No.2, 1978, p.201.
116. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, (Calcutta, 1989), Vol. III, p.167.
117. *Ibid*, Vol. V, p.198; Vol. VI, pp.210, 253-254, 394-395.
118. *Ibid*, Vol. III, pp.295-296; Vol. V, pp.214, 377, 454-457.
119. *Ibid*, Vol. V, pp.31-32.
120. Krishna Prakash Gupta, 'Religious evolution and social change in India: a study of the Ramakrishna Mission Movement', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, No.8, 1974, pp.42-43.
121. Shibnath Shastri, *Jatibhed*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1884), edited by Dilip Biswas, Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, (Calcutta, 1963), p.30.
122. R.P. Dutt, *India To-day*, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1979), p.610.
123. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Gitanjali', *Rabindra Rachanabali*, (hereafter RR), Birth Centenary Edition, Govt. of West Bengal, (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.), Vol. 2, pp.283-284; 'Chautha Aswin', RR, Vol. 11, pp.454-457.
124. 'Sudradharma', RR, Vol. 13, pp.324-325.
125. 'Samajbhed', RR, Vol. 10, p.934.
126. 'Chandalika', RR, Vol. 4, p.557.
127. 'Mahatmajir Punyabrata', RR, Vol. 11, pp.458-461.
128. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, The Publications Division, Government of India, (New Delhi, 1969), Vol. 34, p.75; Vol. 35, pp.1-3, 106-107. Gandhi's thoughts on untouchability and *varnashrama* and their impact on society and politics have been discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.
129. Srikantha Sen to Secy., GB, General, 17 April 1885, GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.90-32, April 1886.

130. See for example, Lalbehari Mazumder, *Asabarna Bibaha Samarthan Pakshe*, (in Bengali), (Malda 1326 B.S.) *passim*.
131. 'Extract from the Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council....', GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8 (1-2), January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17; for a definite case, see Bangachandra Nath Bhattacharya, *Nathbandhu Harimohan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1362 B.S.), p.20.
132. Upendranath Barman, *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, *op. cit.*, pp.43-46; Buddheswar Biswas, *Kuloddeepan Namahchandrika*, (in Bengali), (Barisal, 1328 B.S.), p.34.
133. 'Annual Report on Indian Papers printed or published in the Bengal Presidency for 1915', p.17; GB, Home (Confidential), File No.350 (1-5) of 1916.
134. R.N. Reid, Chief Secy., GB, to Secy., GI, Home, 30 December 1932, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.2/33.
135. Note by C.C. Ghosh and B.P. Singh Roy, 14.3.1934, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.210/34, K.W., p.3.
136. H. LeMesurier, Commissioner, Dacca Division, to the Secy., Govt. of East Bengal and Assam, Judicial Department, 24 April 1909, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.304 of 1911.
137. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, pp.367-368.
138. Report (of the enquiry made to investigate the desirability of appointing a special officer to look after the interests of the depressed classes in Bengal), GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Progs. Nos.7-20.
139. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, p.528. The Simon Commission Report (1930) revealed that the province of Bengal had the second largest untouchable population (11.5 million) in British India. *cf.* Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India*, (Delhi 1984), Table 13, p.126.
140. Digindranarayan Bhattacharya, *Hindur Nabajagaran*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1338 B.S.), pp.73-74.
141. For a recent examination of this literary evidence, see Rajat Kanta Ray, 'The Peasant and the Landless Untouchable in the Fiction of the Gandhian Age', in Sudhir Chandra, (ed.), *Social Transformation and Creative Imagination*, (New Delhi, 1984), pp.263-309.
142. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part I, p.440; *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p.354; *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. V, Part I, p.477; N.K. Dutt, *op. cit.*,

- Vol. II, pp.127, 139-140; Upendranath Barman, *Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, *op. cit.*, pp.9-10.
143. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.366; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Jaistha-Ashadh 1334 B.S
  144. F.I. Manohan, Commissioner, Rajshahi Div. to Chief Secy., GB, Political, 30 October 1912, GB, Political (Political), File No.9A-5 (7-23), B March 1913, Progs. Nos.306-322.
  145. *Kshatriya*, Jaistha 1331 B.S.; *Tilir Gaurab*, Kartik 1326 B.S.
  146. *Tilir Gaurab*, Kartik, Agrahayan, Paush 1326 B.S.
  147. *Gandhabanik*, Falgun 1329 B.S., Kartik 1330 B.S.
  148. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I, p.380.
  149. GB, Political (Political), File No.9A-2 (1-8), B June 1913, Progs. Nos.202-209, K.W.
  150. *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, p.346.
  151. *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Aswin-Kartik, Magh-Falgun 1333 B.S., Jaistha-Ashadh 1334 B.S.; *Modak Hitaishini*, Ashadh 1339 B.S.; *Jogisakha*, Agrahayan 1327 B.S.; Baisakh 1331 B.S.; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Asthadas Barshik Karya bibaran*, *op. cit.*, p.68; Kedamath Sil, *Swaraj Sadhanay Narasundar Samaj*, (in Bengali), (Serajganj, 1331 B.S.), pp.2, 5-17, 26-28; Sitanath Biswas, *op. cit.*, pp.69-71.

## 4

### Caste Associations and 'Depressed Classes' Politics

#### I

Under the impact of colonial rule the pattern of distribution of economic resources along caste lines had started changing. But it had not as yet changed beyond recognition. Inter-occupational mobility was now a more frequent occurrence than it was in the late eighteenth century when Colebrook was observing the phenomenon. But even then, sizeable sections of the members of each caste could still be found in their hereditary caste occupations during the early twentieth century. The traditional higher castes retained much of their former control over the resources of the land. True, some new groups were coming up through purchase of landed rights. But normally it was not a movement from the bottom up. In the dichotomous vertical relationship between the 'rent-receivers' and the 'rent-payers' in Bengal agrarian society, we find an overwhelmingly larger representation of the higher (Brahman, Kayastha and Baidya) and some middle ranking (*Nabasakh* and *jalacharaniya*) castes in the upper stratum and a relatively greater concentration of the unclean and untouchable (*jalavyavahariya* or *ajalchal* and *antyaaja*) castes in the lower stratum of that structure. These higher castes gradually extended this predominance to the field of education and consequently to the modern sectors of white-collar and industrial employments. And so far as trade was concerned, here also only the members of the higher and the middle ranking castes who had already some surplus in their hands, could and did take advantage of the new opportunities thrown up by the foreign trading companies.<sup>1</sup>



Thus the process of change in the material context of caste, that had started during the colonial period, was far from complete during the first few decades of the twentieth century. It was this limited nature of change that made caste so important in secondary, not to speak of primary, group relations among the Bengali Hindus. The disparities between castes were not new; what was new was a growing consciousness about them. This was particularly noticeable in the attitudes and behaviour of those small upwardly mobile groups among the members of the various lower castes. Later these people tried to articulate a spirit of protest that lay dormant in the minds of the depressed sections of their communities. Such leaders also encouraged among them new aspirations to move up in the social scale with the patronage of the colonial government, which had successfully projected itself as the new benefactor of such backward classes. No wonder, in an atmosphere like this, caste became a politically relevant category. Caste-consciousness, it is true, was never so significant in politics in this part of the sub-continent as it was, for example, in southern or western India during the same period. Nevertheless, it had become a force to reckon with—and that too at a time when Muslim separatism had emerged as a viable political alternative to Indian nationalism.

## II

It will, however, be misleading to suggest that caste was not politically relevant during the earlier period of British colonial rule in Bengal. S.N. Mukherjee has referred to *daladali* in the early nineteenth century Calcutta, where caste played an important role.<sup>2</sup> But during our period, these multi-caste *dals* began to dissolve into exclusive caste associations.<sup>3</sup> All the endeavours to improve the social position of the various castes were pursued at an organised level and for this purpose, most of these castes had their own Sabhas or Samitis, while every ambitious caste had an organ of its own, edited by their educated young members.<sup>4</sup> Their purpose was mainly to achieve horizontal solidarity within the castes, as well as to preach through their journals the necessity of 'Sanskritizing' their customs and reforming their life styles. In this way, those various groups sought to move up vertically as corporations in the scale of caste ranking and wanted to get that higher social position recognised by the census authorities as well as by the larger Hindu society. Not only did they try to improve their own status, but in some cases also endeavoured to impugn with *shastriya* argu-

ments the claims of others.<sup>5</sup> True, many of these organisations were what Lucy Carroll has described as ad-hoc petitioning groups that came into existence at the time of each decennial census, "to bombard the harassed census commissioners with memorials and petitions... and (then) promptly lapsed into somnolence, perhaps to emerge from dormancy a decade later."<sup>6</sup> But some of them were more permanent and better organised associations that sought to mobilize the masses in support of their movements.

By the early twentieth century, as we have seen, the cultural contents of each caste had become more or less similar, at least so far as the ritual ceremonies or social customs were concerned. The more blatant forms of untouchability and social disability had also disappeared.<sup>7</sup> But emotional attachment to caste persisted; for caste now became the focus of mobilization for the pursuit of group or individual interests, as the disability of many of the lower castes was now mainly due to economic or educational backwardness. As a result, the caste associations which first began to appear after the census of 1901 rapidly proliferated after 1905, when 'protective discrimination' in favour of the Muslims became an established trend in British policy in Bengal. This generated similar hopes in the minds of the depressed Hindu lower castes, whose leaders now tried to carve out a place for themselves in the new world of institutional politics and professions. What is interesting to note further is that some of the non-Brahman *Satsudra* and intermediary castes, who were relatively more prosperous than the actual 'depressed classes', also shared the same perspectives and behaved almost in an identical manner.

This is not to suggest, however, that these caste associations looked only to government patronage for the upliftment of the social status of their castes. The 'Mahishya Samiti' attempted to organise a broader mass-based movement and called upon its members to become self sufficient and self-reliant—both economically and culturally, and several organisations were started for putting together the resources of the community and to initiate a process of self-reliant development.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the 'Ksnatriya Samiti' of the Rajbansis, founded in 1910, also sought to mobilize the masses. In its fourth annual conference in 1913, it was decided that *Mandali Samitis* would be set up in every village to reach the common people. Ten volunteers were appointed, with regular provision for travelling and living expenses, to spread the message of the movement to the countryside and through their initiative from 1916 such samitis began to come up slowly. At the

same time, the scheme itself went through further elaboration, so that by 1918 a highly developed network of village organisations was operating under the 'Kshatriya Samiti'. Under this system, every Rajbansi village had a *Mandali* at the top and *Patti* or neighbourhood organisations, each under a *Pattanayaka*, at the bottom. Ten to twelve *Pattis* formed a *Gadiani*, each under a *Gadian*, and five to seven of them constituted a *Mandali*. Above the *Mandalis*, at the sub-divisional level there were *Mahamandali Samitis*, all of them being directly answerable to the Central Committee of the 'Kshatriya Samiti', located at Rangpur.<sup>9</sup> These *samitis* were supposed to function as village governments and courts of arbitration, they would spread education and preach ritual reforms and also function as co-operative societies for the economic improvement of the Rajbansi villagers. By 1926 three hundred such *Mandali Samitis* had been established. The organ of the 'Kshatriya Samiti' also continuously tried to help their peasant-members by regularly giving them practical advice on scientific agricultural methods. A Kshatriya Bank was established at Rangpur for the benefit of the Rajbansi peasants. In the field of education, the Rajbansis of Rangpur in 1911 volunteered to pay a portion of the estimated cost of the government hostel for the students of their community. Apart from this the 'Kshatriya Samiti' also offered scholarships for the education of the poor Rajbansi students and by 1925 it had spent about Rs.10,000 for the education of 70 such students. With these students, a 'Kshatriya Chhatra Samiti' was formed and its members were asked to repay their social debt by participating in welfare activities to help the poor members of their community.<sup>10</sup>

In almost the same way, though less effectively, some other caste associations like those of the Sahas, Baruis or Sadgops, also sought to mobilize mass support through local organisations and attempted at self-reliant development by patronising education of their members or opening co-operative societies for the better pursuit of their hereditary trade.<sup>11</sup> The Sahas of eastern Bengal, apart from their 'Purbabanga Vaisya Samiti' founded sometime in 1909, had another parallel organisation called the 'Swajati Hitasadhan Samiti'. Started at Dacca in 1898, it had become defunct by 1910, but was revived again in 1922. In 1923, it convened at Dacca the first provincial conference of the Vaisya Sahas of eastern Bengal and Sylhet and through this meeting came into existence a broader social organisation called 'East Bengal and Sylhet Vaisya Saha Sammilani'. It resolved in its second conference at Pakutia, also in 1923, that local *samitis* would

be set up at the district, sub-divisional and village levels and through them endeavour would be made for the spread of education both formal and non-formal, and for the opening of a model agricultural farm and a co-operative bank.<sup>12</sup> The 'Sadgop Sabha', founded in 1901, also instructed its members to contribute a portion of their expenditure incurred for social or ritual functions to a joint fund which would be expended to help the destitutes, to spread education and to promote the advancement of the trading and agricultural methods to be pursued by their members.<sup>13</sup> The 'Jessore and Nadia Sutradhar Samaj', started in 1926, had also asked its members to make similar contributions. But apart from that, it also devised a novel scheme of starting a joint-stock company with shares, worth ten rupees each, sold only to the members of the caste. A portion of its profits was to be distributed among the share-holders, but the rest would accumulate in a community fund which would be spent on either philanthropic programmes or for issuing easy loans to its members at times of distress.<sup>14</sup>

Such self-initiative to promote material advancement of the community was however more common among the prosperous trading castes, the Subarnabaniks, Tilis and Gandhabaniks for example. The early organisations of the Subarnabaniks, like the 'Saptagramiya Subarnabanik Hitasadhani Sabha', founded in 1878, or the 'Subarnabanik Samiti', started in 1901, were concerned more with social matters and less with the material well-being of the community, which had been left to individual initiative. Their collective effort at self-improvement began around 1907 when a 'Subarnabanik Yuvak Samiti' was formed in Calcutta. Under the leadership of Nrityalal Mullick, it was later transformed into the 'Calcutta Subarnabanik Samaj'. Its executive committee took initiative to convene a provincial conference of the caste, called the 'Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani', at Calcutta in April 1916. Here it was decided that district and village committees would be set up and the 'Sammilani' or the regular provincial conference of the representatives of these local bodies would be made a permanent feature of their community organisation. From the next year, such local samitis actually started coming up and they participated, under the overall guidance of the Calcutta Samaj, in various constructive programmes. Their first emphasis, of course, was on education and for this purpose scholarships were offered to needy students, a free hostel was set up in Calcutta and libraries were established both in Calcutta and in the interior. A number of private endowments and

collective funds were also administered both by the central and the local samitis for providing educational scholarships, offering financial assistance to needy and lonely widows or running charitable dispensaries. The question of female education also attracted their organisational attention, as local samitis at various places were trying to establish exclusive institutions for this purpose. In December 1925 they took a novel step in this direction: the Calcutta Samaj organised a, 'Subarnabanik Mahila Sammilani' or a women's conference, the first of its kind, where five hundred ladies discussed their own problems and worked out strategies to solve them. Besides general education, vocational training was another area of interest for the Subarnabanik community leaders. It was deemed essential particularly for the advancement of their traditional trade. Young members of the caste were therefore encouraged to take advantage of the existing facilities of technical education available in the country and in some cases were also sent abroad for such training. Under the auspices of the 'Calcutta Subarnabanik Samaj', a Commercial School was also started at Chetla, for providing knowledge in such subjects as book-keeping or typing which the organisers considered essential for the pursuit of their business in a new modern environment. Other collective measures or proposals to promote business activities included plans to start joint-stock companies or establish co-operative banks, discussion and publication of articles on modern business methods or agricultural techniques and providing regular business tips through the journal.<sup>15</sup>

Almost in a similar way, though on a much lesser scale, the two associations working among the Tilis, the 'Tilijati Sammilani' and the 'Tilijati Hitaishi Sabha', also offered scholarships to needy students and provided financial assistance for the poor and the destitutes. Their organs also published special articles that gave instructions on how to start a business and succeed in it.<sup>16</sup> But in this respect the Gandhabaniks were perhaps more ingenuous. Apart from their local associations and regular meetings in the interior villages, they arranged in Calcutta in December 1923 a 'Gandhabanik Mahasammilani', which was expected to act as a common forum for the exchange of ideas and promotion of business through an extension of contacts among their caste members dispersed over a wide region. They also proposed to raise funds to send their children abroad to acquire "industrial, commercial and technological education", in "pharmaceutical chemistry" for example, which would help them modernise their traditional trade. They also regularly discussed the methods of opening "limited com-

panies" in order to participate in the national and international trade in spices to reduce their dependence on the Marwari and Bhatia wholesalers. Their monthly journal provided the subscribers with regular information on market rates and the qualities of different herbs that could be used for the manufacture of medicines and toiletry on a commercial scale. And at the top of it, the journal regularly advertised the products of the Gandhabanik concerns, both on commercial terms and as news items.<sup>17</sup>

Among the less advanced castes, the Namasudras in eastern Bengal also organised village committees and spoke of self-help for the material improvement of their community.<sup>18</sup> For the spread of education among their members, the Pods or Paundra-Kshatriyas awarded a gold medal every year from 1910 to the boy of their community who would stand first in the Middle English examination in the district of the 24-Parganas — an example, followed by the Baruis as well.<sup>19</sup> The association of the Jogis also tried to organise their members through local committees, made strenuous efforts for the dissemination of education and scientific instructions on the craft of weaving, their traditional occupation, and asked their members to take advantage of the shift in popular attention to handloom during the *swadeshi* era, for improving their economic condition.<sup>20</sup>

But most of the associations, with their limited resources, were not in a position to cope with the immense problem of backwardness of the majority of their members.<sup>21</sup> Naturally, therefore, they looked to the government for patronage. In this direction, the 'Vaisya Barujibi Sabha' had perhaps gone to the extreme by desiring to have the Lieutenant Governor himself as their chief patron.<sup>22</sup> The other associations confined their efforts to prayers and petitions. The Namasudras sent several deputations, one in 1905 to meet Sir Bampfylde Fuller, one in 1907 to meet Sir Lancelot Hare, one in 1912 to meet Lord Carmichael, another in 1917 to meet the Earl of Ronaldshay, and later, two other to meet Lord Lytton and Sir Stanley Jackson. The delegations prayed for state patronage, particularly educational facilities and government employment for the members of their community.<sup>23</sup> The 'Jogi Sammilani' also submitted petitions to government, asking for educational scholarships and employment.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, the 'Mahishya Samaj' entreated the government to pay favourable attention to their demand for jobs, schools and scholarships.<sup>25</sup> The Rajbansi 'Kshatriya Samiti' resolved, almost every year in their annual conferences, to appeal to the government to recruit them in larger

numbers for the army and to start a Kshatriya Regiment for them, to nominate them in the local bodies and to extend preferential treatment to them in matters of education and employment.<sup>26</sup> The Rajbansis were not prepared to be classified as a 'depressed class', because of the social stigma attached to that category. But they had no reservation about accepting, or for that matter also praying for, special favour from the government, offered in view of their backward condition.<sup>27</sup> The President of the 'Bangiya Karmakar Sammilani' also complained of the monopolisation of the government executive services by certain numerically unimportant "castes", "classes" and "communities" who were first to take advantage of English education. Now that the other castes were also catching up, to redress the existing imbalance he demanded some appointments for the deserving youngmen of the Karmakar caste as well.<sup>28</sup> In this orchestrated prayer for institutional facilities, it is interesting to note, some of the materially more advanced castes, such as the Subarnabaniks or the Sahas, did not stay behind either.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, however, the more important question was that of representation in the Legislative Council. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 by granting special electorate to the Muslims had generated similar aspirations in the minds of many 'depressed' Hindu castes, who did not have even minimum representation in the legislative bodies so far. During the war, there was a growing expectation that at the end of it more power would be handed over to the Indians. But as the nationalists demanded self-government, the educated members of some of the lower castes, particularly the articulate sections among the 'depressed classes', apprehended that if more power was transferred it would be monopolised by the more privileged upper castes. The Justice Party in Madras, therefore, looked to the British government for protection against a Brahman oligarchy. The Namasudras in Bengal had taken a similar stand. When the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform proposals were announced, in a conference in 1917 they resolved that if any additional power were "vested in the hands of a few leaders without giving any share of power to us it... (would) make the future progress of the backward classes impossible".<sup>30</sup> A similar conference next year unequivocally demanded "communal representation" to safeguard "the interests of so many different castes" and to prevent "the oligarchy of a handful of limited castes". The resolution was also endorsed by the leaders of certain other backward castes, such as the Pods, Rajbansis and the Kapalis.<sup>31</sup> The Tilis,

although they did not talk of communal representation, shared nevertheless the same apprehensions.<sup>32</sup>

Similar demands were being voiced from other quarters as well, and that too since the days of the elections held under the earlier constitutional reforms of 1909. On 15 October 1912, under the heading "The Legislative Council", the *Nayak*, a Calcutta paper, made a number of suggestions in view of the forthcoming election to the Bengal Legislative Council. In the opinion of the paper, the real representatives of Hindu society found no place in the Councils; it was only a section of the English-educated *babus* that got themselves elected. Since caste distinctions had no chance of ever being dissolved in future, much discontent would have been therefore removed, if the elections were made on the basis of caste. "Thus", it observed, "the importance and the influence of the upstart Babus will be gone. The English-educated Babus are at heart opposed to any increase of influence of the Hindu masses; for they know that that means the loss of their own influence. If the Government wants to destroy the sham agitation in this country, if it wants to root out discontent, let it elect members to the Council on the basis of caste, religion and numerical strength."<sup>33</sup>

As a result of these public demands, the Government of India Act of 1919 formally recognised the special needs of the 'depressed classes' by providing for the nomination of one representative from them to the Bengal Legislative Council. A larger nominated representation was not found necessary, as we have already seen, because it was expected that numerically larger castes, such as the Mahishyas and the Namasudras, would be able to capture some more seats through general election. But the experience of the elections between 1921 and 1930, as the leaders of the 'depressed classes' pointed out, showed that it was not number that was important for securing representation in the legislature. The 'depressed' lower castes, although numerically strong, were mostly deprived of the suffrage due to property qualifications. Even when they had the voting right, they could not exercise it freely, because of their illiteracy, the influence of the landlords and money-lenders, coupled with religious interference. In the first election in 1921, only nine of their candidates were elected; in 1923 seven, in 1926 four and in 1929 only five such candidates could get through the elections. In the 1930 by-election, which was held as the Swarajists came out of the Council and which was boycotted by the Congress, only six 'depressed classes' candidates could successfully get through. A number of their prominent leaders were defeated, as in the previous



elections, in spite of the considerable support they enjoyed through their caste associations.<sup>34</sup>

In all the districts with more than 50 per cent 'depressed classes' population, the elected candidates, if Hindu, would therefore almost inevitably belong to the three traditional upper castes. The *Tilir Gaurab* for this reason noted with contempt in 1920, that all political power, so far transferred by the British, had almost been completely monopolised by the higher castes who took advantage of their privileged position sanctioned by religion. This situation it wanted to be reversed as soon as possible.<sup>35</sup> But the problem had another dimension too, related as it were to mutual competition and differential development of political consciousness among the 'depressed classes' themselves. With the Mahishyas already excluded from this category, most of these candidates who could actually go to the legislature were either Rajbansi or Namasudra, the two most articulate groups among them in Bengal. There were six Tilis among these candidates, four were elected in 1921, and one each in the other years. But of them, Upendra Lal Roy Bahadur (1921), Ranjit Pal Chowdhuri (1929) and Maharaja Srish Chandra Nandi (1926, 1930) were substantial landlords and thus did not truly represent the interests of the 'depressed classes'. So was Prasanna Deb Raikat, the rich Rajbansi *zamindar* of Jalpai-guri, who won all the elections from 1921 to 1930. Among the other successful candidates, Hem Chandra Naskar (Pod), Hossemi Raut (Dosadh) and Mohini Mohan Das (Namasudra) were elected through Congress support and therefore had no connection with the 'depressed classes' movement. Thus the number of "real" representatives of these classes including the nominated members in the Bengal legislature was really small: 3 Tilis, 2 Namasudras, 1 Chamar and 1 Rajbansi in 1921; 2 Rajbansis, 1 Tili and 1 Dhoba in 1923; 1 Rajbansi and 1 Namasudra in 1926; 1 Rajbansi and 2 Namasudras in 1929; and 3 Namasudras and 1 Rajbansi in 1930.<sup>36</sup> These few representatives again came from only four communities, the others remaining completely unrepresented. In this way the leaders of the 'depressed classes' continuously found their political aspirations frustrated by the politicking and electioneering skill of the high caste Hindu leaders operating through the organisational network of a modern political party. As the hopes of progress through political integration were thus belied, political separatism seemed to be the natural choice for the 'depressed classes' leaders.

## III

Around this time, some of the lower castes of Bengal, particularly those who were enjoying special privileges by virtue of their being classed as 'depressed', began to drift away from the nationalist movement. In their perception, it had come to be associated with the high caste Hindu *bhadralok*, pursuing their sectarian or group-interests through this agitation. The Namasudras of eastern Bengal not only refused to participate in the *Swadeshi*, Non-co-operation or the Civil-Disobedience movements, but on a number of occasions and in different places opposed such movements actively.<sup>37</sup> The Rajbansis of north Bengal were occasionally involved in the *Swadeshi* or the Non-cooperation movements and later developed connections with the Hindu Mahasabha. Some of the important personalities among them, like Upendranath Barman or Jagadindradev Raikat, were also deeply influenced by the nationalist fervour at different junctures. But in spite of all these, their Kshatriya movement on the whole remained loyal to the British, and in its thirteenth annual conference in 1926, their Samiti adopted a formal resolution expressing its "loyalty and obedience" to the Raj.<sup>38</sup> The wealthy Saha merchants of eastern Bengal initially saw in the *Swadeshi* movement an opportunity of improving their ritual status in Hindu society. They organised a 'Mahajan Samiti' and decided to refrain from selling foreign goods in the hope of a more sympathetic attitude of the higher castes to their social claims. But soon they discovered that this only meant a diminution of their profit, but not an improvement of their social status. Consequently, during the later years of the *Swadeshi* movement, we find most of the Saha merchants dealing openly in foreign goods.<sup>39</sup> This on the one hand, earned them *darbar* titles from the government, but on the other, made them targets of terrorist attack.<sup>40</sup> Later, during the Non-co-operation-Khilafat movements, considerable tension built up in different parts of eastern Bengal between the loyal Saha merchants and moneylenders on the one hand and the Muslim cultivators on the other.<sup>41</sup> Peace was restored only when the Saha Samiti negotiated with the government and placated the Muslims for the establishment of an Arbitration Board which would settle future disputes between the two communities.<sup>42</sup>

The other organised castes which were materially more advanced, suffered from a greater dilemma on the question of nationalism. Their movements, like the others, had also started with a loyalist tone. But as the nationalist movement gained in legitimacy through popular sup-

port, they too began to shift, though hesitatingly, from their earlier position. Yet this process of transformation was not without torment, as the earlier inhibitions, suspicions and feelings of rancour still persisted. Only they were now expressed with greater caution and usually under cover. For example, every single number of *Tilir Gaurab*, even at the time of Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Non-co-operation movement, carried on its front page an appeal to all their caste brethren to pray to God, "with folded hands and devoted mind", for the permanence of British rule in India. A number of wealthy Tili traders had allegedly become targets of political dacoities like the Sahas, and this had made some of their leaders, like Sitanath Ray, articulate supporters of the Rowlatt Bill in 1919.<sup>43</sup> Many others also remained personally loyal to the British, even withstanding various social and economic pressures. In far off Rangpur, for example, the tenants of Manindra Chandra Nandi, during the Non-co-operation movement, had threatened to withhold their rents, if he continued to pay his revenues to the government.<sup>44</sup> But towards the end of the '20's, the Tilis also began to revise their loyalist position and their other organ, *Ban-giya Tili Samaj Patrika* started publishing articles that clearly reflected the nationalist sentiment.<sup>45</sup> In the case of the Subarnabaniks, their first provincial conference in 1916 had started with a resolution that expressed the unflinching loyalty of the caste to the British crown. The position was further clarified in the fifth conference in 1919. Since trade and commerce could flourish only under stable administration, it was announced at least twice in the conference, the Subarnabaniks as a trading caste would remain loyal to the British under whom they had prospered steadily. The attitude, however, began to change perceptibly toward the end of the 1920's. In their twelfth provincial conference in 1926, the President in his inaugural address stated, though apologetically, that the major constraint for the development of indigenous trade and commerce was the alien rule, as its discriminatory policies favoured only the foreign merchants at the expense of the local traders. Next year, the *Subarnabanik Samachar* published a more candid article that dealt directly with the question of "swaraj" and "freedom". It appreciated such notions as "love for the country" and desired that everyone might get inspired by such ideas. "But does this love for the country mean only love for the land?" Could the country really prosper, as the author's doubts were, without the improvement of the people who lived on that land? The real emancipation of the country, he grudgingly cautioned the nationalists, would not take place until

the barriers of hatred that kept millions of people away were dismantled first.<sup>46</sup> This kind of acceptance of nationalism with lingering anger about its lacking in social content was also quite evident in the behaviour of the Barujibi association. It had started its life with manifest loyalism, but later, since the days of the Home Rule movement, began to express sympathy for the nationalist cause. But still many of their members could not get over their inhibitions completely and some were even suspicious about the real nature of the nationalist movement.<sup>47</sup> The other advanced castes, like the Gandhabaniks, were less explicit on their position vis-a-vis the nationalist movement. But they too were demanding, since their first provincial conference in 1923, such things as protective tariffs.<sup>48</sup>

A change of course leading to subsequent merger with the nationalist mainstream was however a much more prominent feature of the Mahishya movement in Midnapur. They constituted about 75 per cent of the population and filled up all the strata of the agrarian structure in the eastern part of the district. While their caste association remained firm in its loyalty to the British,<sup>49</sup> the larger Mahishya community, under the able leadership of Birendranath Sasmal, moved into the anti-imperialist struggle through the agitation against the Union Boards, which were established in Midnapur in 1921 and were placed under official supervision, with an imposition of an enhanced *chaukidari* tax that affected the lower peasantry. By 1931, the combination of the different social strata which had been carrying on the movement for the upliftment of their caste, was transformed into "the broad front of the Congress for resisting British rule". The common caste identity of both the share-croppers and the *jotdars* provided for additional means of effective social mobilization.<sup>50</sup>

The Mahishyas since the late 1920's, as we have already seen, were no longer recognised by the government as a 'depressed class' and, therefore, were not entitled to special favour in terms of public patronage. Hence, with more social surplus at their disposal, they had very little to lose by a rupture of relations with the British. But the other 'depressed' castes, like the Jogis or the Bhuimalis, much less prosperous than the Mahishyas, but with almost equally high social ambitions, could hardly afford to antagonise the Raj. The poor members of the Jogi caste had always been loyal, declared their official organ *Jogisakha* on successive occasions.<sup>51</sup> The social movement of the Bhuimalis of eastern Bengal in the early years of the twentieth century, in spite of the best efforts of the *swadeshi* leaders, could not

also be incorporated into the mainstream of nationalist politics.<sup>52</sup> In open opposition to it, they were soon united with their Namasudra and Rajbansi brethren in parts of eastern and northern Bengal.

It will be, however, an oversimplification if we conclude that all these Hindu lower castes were opposing the nationalist movement and collaborating with the British merely out of a selfish desire for loaves and fishes. The glaring historical disparities between themselves and the higher caste Hindus, in terms of economic achievements and social status, undoubtedly constituted the greatest alienating factor. It was true, wrote a Paundra-Kshatriya leader in 1921, that some of the so-called upper castes were more advanced in education and knowledge. But they were so because they found greater opportunities for advancement. If the backward castes got the same opportunities, they would excel as well, as some of them actually did.<sup>53</sup> So in this context, the recent official policy of protecting the interests of the underprivileged lower castes could easily bring them sentimentally closer to the Raj. But this attachment was also embedded in an ideology that emanated from a different perception of history and a different attitude to colonial regime, vis-a-vis those of the nationalists. As the nationalists portrayed the establishment of colonial rule as a break with a glorious past, the lower caste people considered the new regime to be an improvement over that past. The new era seemed to be pregnant with new possibilities, particularly that of permanent elimination of the age-old disparities, discriminations and disabilities. "God has placed the Englishmen on the throne of this fallen country as its divine ordainer of destiny", observed *Mahishya Samaj* in 1911.<sup>54</sup> "There is no more the casteism or communalism of the middle ages", wrote *Kshatriya* in 1920; "God has dispensed even-handed justice by placing the Indians for their proper education in the hands of a noble nation from far off Britain."<sup>55</sup> There was no more "the jealous rule of the Rajas",<sup>56</sup> and "even the Sudras can now read the Vedas".<sup>57</sup> Unlike the previous Hindu or Muslim Kings, the "generous" English made no distinction of caste.<sup>58</sup> "There is no longer the domination of the selfish Brahman", the Jogis were delighted, as "western liberalism gives merit its reward irrespective of caste".<sup>59</sup> This image of a golden present dominated the minds of some of the well-off trading groups as well. Like the Buddhist period, observed *Subarnabanik Samachar*, "an age of equality among the Hindus has again been ushered in."<sup>60</sup> "Under the rule of the generous English", noted *Tilir Gaurab* on successive occasions, "many non-Brahman castes have attained

self-realisation". This had resulted in their gaining in "honour" and in this sense the British had brought about a real "national awakening" in India.<sup>61</sup> In this new "egalitarian rule", wrote a Saha panegyrist, anyone could aspire for self-improvement, as education and wealth had become equally accessible.<sup>62</sup> To all these social groups, therefore, any political movement against British rule appeared to be steps in historical retrogression, as attempts to put the clock back and hence against their legitimate community-centric interests.

However simple this perception of the nature of colonial rule might have been, this was due not only to the government policy of protective discrimination, but also to an appalling lack of initiative on the part of the higher caste Hindus and the nationalists. They did not undertake any worthwhile constructive programme for the social and economic upliftment of the backward castes in order to mobilize them in support of their political movements. Of course, there was no lack of awareness about the gravity of the problem. "Their present degradation is India's open wound", noted C.F. Andrews in 1909.<sup>63</sup> "Is it not obvious", reminded *The Modern Review* in an editorial comment in November 1912, "that if we had no pariahs, no despised or untouchable castes among ourselves, ... if we could march forward in a practically solid phalanx, the movement for the betterment of our international position would acquire a far greater momentum than it possesses at present?" "Those who want to think of India as a nation", wrote the famous Bengali scientist Prafulla Chandra Ray, "cannot leave anybody aside". So when the lower castes began to oppose the nationalist demand for self-government in 1918-19 and asked for adequate safeguards for their own political rights, he described it as a "penance" for the Hindu society for its own meanness and accumulated sins.<sup>64</sup> Had they not been subjugated in such a way and for such a long time, wrote another Hindu social reformer, they would not interpret self-government as a possible road to Brahman oligarchy. This fissiparous tendency, he thought, was the main cause of India's loss of independence and so it had to be rooted out, the earlier the better.<sup>65</sup>

It was hoped at that time that the reform movements and the philanthropic organisations would be able to grapple with this greatest unsolved social problem of India. In 1883 one such organisation named 'Native Philanthropic Association for the Regeneration of Pariahs in Southern India' was started at Bangalore; a few years later in 1906, Bithalram Sindhe established in Bombay, the 'Depressed Classes Mission Society of India'. In Bengal, the Sadharan Brahmo

Samaj, established by Shibnath Shastri, was the first organisation to take upon itself the task of fighting untouchability and uplifting the social status of the despised castes. Under his initiative in 1909 a 'Depressed Classes Mission' was established, which in 1913 changed its name into 'Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes'. Its work was mainly educational and according to its reports, between 1916 and 1921 it had established 104 schools in Bengal and Assam and between 1909 and 1923 it had imparted literacy to about 45,000 people.<sup>66</sup> According to its one time President, Lord S.P. Sinha, it used to run a school for about 50 boys at an abnormally low cost of Rs.2 a month. The rest of the expenditure came as contributions from villagers and the teachers gave their services in the spirit of missionaries.<sup>67</sup> Apart from this most important institution, there were other indigenous philanthropic organisations as well, such as the 'Bengal Social Service League' and the numerous day and night schools for the backward classes run by smaller and local organisations.<sup>68</sup> But the work actually done by all these bodies taken together was really insignificant in view of the magnitude of the problem and in comparison with the achievements of the Christian missionaries and the initiative of the government. The shortage of fund was the main constraint that these organisations suffered from. The problem forced the 'Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes' to accept in 1918 a government subsidy which subjected it to close government scrutiny and the Society lost its independent character as a result.<sup>69</sup> By 1922, it virtually became an agency of the British government, as all official grants for the improvement of the schools for the backward classes began to be distributed through this body.<sup>70</sup> By 1924-25, the recurring government grant it received far exceeded its independent collection of private subscriptions.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from these philanthropic endeavours of a more secular nature, there was also a realisation that the problem of untouchability was responsible in a significant way for the erosion of the Hindu mass base through conversions to Christianity and Islam — a fear articulated by Lt. Col. U.N. Mukherjee in 1909 in his book *The Dying Race*. Later, a 'Hindu Jatiya Shiksha Sabha' was started with Mukherjee as the Secretary. Sarada Charan Mitra, an ex-Judge of the Calcutta High Court also began to organise around 1910-11 a pan-Hindu movement in order to counteract Muslim and Christian proselytism.<sup>72</sup> The trend later merged into the Hindu Sabha movement. In 1923 at the Bengal Provincial Hindu Conference at Sirajganj, untouchability

was identified as one of the three major problems of the Hindu community. It had to be removed, not only to prevent the diminution of its numbers, but to forestall as well an imminent social revolution that might turn the world upside down. "In Hindu society", it was declared therefore at the conference, "no one's water is non-passable". This had to be remembered and followed.<sup>73</sup> In May 1924, the Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha had a mammoth meeting at Calcutta. It was presided over by Swami Avedananda and it preached once again the elimination of untouchability, solidarity among the Hindus and the necessity of the *Suddhi* movement.<sup>74</sup> The next Provincial Hindu Sabha, held at Faridpur in May 1925, was more important, as it was graced by the presence of Gandhi himself. Here in his Presidential Address, Prafulla Chandra Ray declared, rather boldly, that it was the "curse of untouchability" which was the major reason for India's captivity and the greatest obstacle to her attainment of *swaraj*. So he asked everybody there to take the vow in the presence of Gandhi, that immediately they would start accepting water from the hands of the lower castes and thus would spare them of the indignity which they had suffered so long.<sup>75</sup> Apart from this idea of water acceptance as a means to remove untouchability, also preached in a series of propaganda meetings in the countryside,<sup>76</sup> the other issue that came under focus was that of temple entry. "God never gets polluted", it was declared at the Sirajganj conference, "if people enter his temple. We do not worship just stone pieces...".<sup>77</sup> All those who were devout Hindus should have equal access to Hindu temples, stated a pamphlet circulated by the <sup>13</sup>Burrabazar Hindu Sabha<sup>78</sup> in 1926.<sup>78</sup> This whole movement reached its climax around 1929, when under the leadership of Swami Satyananda of Hindu Mission a temple entry *satyagraha* was organised in Munshiganj, Dacca, with the help of the local Namasudras.<sup>79</sup> But in the overall texture of the organised Hindu movement there was always an underlying tone of offering charity from above. Sometimes it was not explicit, but often it was clearly stated, as in the pamphlet of the Burrabazar Hindu Sabha<sup>80</sup> mentioned above. To withstand the attacks of the Muslims, the Hindus of Bengal must unite and to achieve this unity some more rights and privileges should be granted to the lower castes. But this reorganisation of the Hindu community, it was stated in no uncertain words, should take place under the leadership of the Brahmans.<sup>80</sup> It was this ingrained high caste Hindu chauvinism and also its well-known Congress connection that ultimately made the Hindu Sabha movement unpopular



among the lower castes of Bengal.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, to many of these lower caste Hindus and their associations, the Congress Party seemed to be an organisation of the privileged higher castes with whom they did not feel any identity of interests. It is by now a well-known fact that the Congress was all along dominated by the three traditional higher castes of Bengal. According to Leonard Gordon's rough calculations, among the Bengal moderates at the 1907 Surat Congress, 87.8 per cent were definitely or likely high caste Hindus, while in 1924-25, 69.4 per cent of the members of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee belonged to this same social group.<sup>82</sup> And these men had pathetically failed to win the confidence of the lower caste masses. As an example, we may cite the case of the *Swadeshi* movement in which the leaders as well as the volunteers both came almost exclusively from this single social category. In order to make their movement more broad-based, their leaders Ambika Charan Mazumder and Aswini Kumar Datta frantically tried to mobilize the Namasudras and the other lower castes of eastern Bengal. They repeatedly promised to work for their social upliftment if they supported their political movement. The issue was raised in different nationalist conferences at that time, for example, in the Bengal Provincial Conference (Pabna, 1908), Barisal District Conference (Barisal, 1908) and the United Bengal Provincial Conference (Faridpur, 1911). But mere empty promises, with social relations remaining unchanged, coupled with the absence of any concrete socio-economic programme, made the lower caste masses suspicious about the real intentions and motives of the nationalists. The movement, therefore, was identified with the high caste Hindus, being organised for furtherance of their own group interests and thus against the interests of the lower castes.<sup>83</sup>

During the later period, there was again no dearth of zeal of individual social reformers close to the nationalist camp. Digindra Narayan Bhattacharya, a Congressite social reformer associated with the Hindu Mahasabha, had started in the early years of the twentieth century a single-handed crusade against the evils of casteism and untouchability, even at the great personal risk of being socially persecuted. In his most acclaimed book *Jatibhed*, dedicated to the wretched of the society, he gave a clarion call to the Sudra *jatis* of Bengal to be up against oppressive Hindu society and win over their social rights.<sup>84</sup> Surendranath Banerjea in his review of the book in *Bengalee*, appealed to all "thoughtful men" to extend their "helping

hands to this young author and to see that the indefatigable industry and untiring zeal he has displayed in this work for the suffering and down-trodden section of the community do not go unrewarded and unrecognised."<sup>85</sup> He himself took initiative for the extension of education among the 'depressed classes', and both in the provincial and central Legislative Councils spoke for government patronage for such indigenous efforts at social reform, while opposing direct government intervention in such social questions.<sup>86</sup> Other leaders like Dr. Nilratan Sircar, Radha Charan Pal and Brojendra Kishor Roy Choudhuri were also eloquent in the Bengal Legislative Council in order to attract the attention of the government to this pressing social problem.<sup>87</sup> But by doing this, they allowed the initiative to pass on to the hands of the government and thus unwittingly prepared the ground for the evolution of the policy of protective discrimination, that further drove these deprived people closer to the Raj.

To most of these nationalist leaders the question of social reform was perhaps much less important than the problem of organising a political movement for wresting more concessions from the Raj. Neither could they avoid this issue any longer. Hence in 1917, in its Calcutta session, presided over by Annie Besant, the Congress departed from its usual practice of ignoring social questions and adopted a resolution that urged upon the people "the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom on the Depressed Classes....".<sup>88</sup> But in the same year, *Sanjibani*, a nationalist paper in Calcutta wrote: "If Indians have caste-differences, there are conflicts due to religion, wealth etc. among Englishmen as well. .... (Therefore) Indians want the reforms advocated by the Congress and the Moslem League to be granted immediately after the war. They cannot be satisfied with anything less."<sup>89</sup>

However, the whole texture of Indian politics changed with the rise of Gandhi and the advent of the masses into politics. Under his stewardship the Nagpur Congress adopted a highly significant political resolution. In order "to establish Swaraj within one year", it urged all bodies "to settle disputes between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, and to make special efforts to rid Hinduism of reproach of untouchability".<sup>90</sup> In a number of speeches also, Gandhi reiterated the necessity of abolishing untouchability.<sup>91</sup> As a result, there was a widespread belief among some of the lower castes of Bengal that caste-equality was a principle of the Non-co-operation movement he had launched. It is believed that Gandhi's "charismatic appeal" as a consequence

began to reach "deep down to the bottom layer of the society", the tribals, the low castes, the landless labourers — all of whom began to show "a contempt of all authority." But they were perhaps expecting much more than the Congress leaders in Bengal were prepared to offer. Almost nothing was done in the direction of social reform and no major economic programme was ever undertaken. As a result, although the rich Mahishya farmers felt no hesitation about joining the Congress, the political response of the 'depressed' castes like the Namasudras or the Rajbansis was rather weak.<sup>92</sup>

But the, the Non-co-operation movement itself was withdrawn before it could properly take off. From late 1922, C.R. Das began to put across his ideas about Council-entry, which were accepted by the Congress high-command in 1923, and henceforth his Swarajya Party concentrated more on Council-politics than on broader social issues. Before the election of 1923, however, Das could rope in a few influential representatives of the 'depressed classes', like Jagadindradev Raikat, a Rajbansi *zamindar* of Jalpaiguri, Dr. Mohini Mohan Das, a Namasudra leader from Dacca and Hem Chandra Naskar, the leader of the Pod community of the 24-Parganas. While Raikat became the President of the Jalpaiguri District Congress Committee, the other two were elected to the Council with Swarajya Party tickets, Das from Faridpur and Naskar from the 24-Parganas. Indeed, Mohini Mohan eventually became a close confidant of C.R. Das in all matters related to Council politics.<sup>93</sup> Apart from this, in meetings held in the interior, C.R. Das also spoke eloquently of the necessity of organising the *rai-yats* and of removing untouchability.<sup>94</sup> And Mohini Mohan in 1925 pleaded for an enhanced education budget for the primary education of the 'depressed classes', for he felt that a "large part of the social body is lying inert from want of education and is frustrating by its inaction all our agitations for *Swaraj*."<sup>95</sup>

But the Swarajists on the whole had confined themselves to constitutional politics alone and, as *Atma Sakti* remarked on 15 January 1926, "neglected the constructive programme". As a result, as *Anandabazar Patrika* put it (16 January 1926), the people were gradually losing all faith and hope in the Congress. For many of them felt that the Swarajists and the other Congress leaders had done nothing for their benefit. "On the contrary", wrote *Sanjivani* on 24 December 1925, "they have done harm to the peasants and the depressed classes by their actions".<sup>96</sup> So far as the broader social relations were concerned, the Swarajists believed that all conflicts should be resolved in a manner

that should satisfy all. But while trying to do this, they often dissatisfied those who were already in a disadvantageous position. This became evident when the new Tenancy Bill came up for discussion in the Council in August 1928. In the debate that followed, the Swarajists consistently upheld the *zamindar-jotdar* interests. And it was primarily due to their concerted opposition that some of the proposed amendments to safeguard the interests of the *bargadars* and *under-raiyats* were defeated, despite the 'depressed classes' legislators, like Rebati Mohan Sarkar and Nagendra Narayan Ray, rallying with the Muslims in their support.<sup>97</sup> Such nationalist action could only perhaps result in, as it did, the alienation of the lesser peasantry, most of whom were either Muslims or lower caste Hindus.

In contrast to such nationalist apathy, concessions from the government had started coming in abundance in the shape of educational facilities and reservation in government employment which at least satisfied the lower caste elites. The nationalist press, almost in unison, condemned such provisions, particularly that of communal representation in public services. *Anandabazar Patrika* (19 June 1927) thought that this would lead to more communal quarrel and inefficiency. On the other hand, the orthodox Hindu press, like *Bangavasi* of Calcutta, as a reaction to Gandhi's tirade against untouchability, started justifying it, as a legitimate method of self-preservation.<sup>98</sup> All these tendencies only contributed further to the strengthening of the existing social cleavages.

But at the same time, particularly since the middle of the 1920's, the untouchability removal programme of Gandhi was also gathering momentum in the Bengal countryside. Outside the orbit of the Congress organisation, a series of meetings were held in rural areas to discuss the "programme of Gandhi Maharaj",<sup>99</sup> and to implement it, a number of voluntary associations were formed.<sup>100</sup> The Congress volunteers also visited the houses of the *antyaja* castes and in symbolic gestures accepted food and water from their hands.<sup>101</sup> Already in 1923, Digindra Narayan Bhattacharya had launched a movement for providing the services of the barbers (*Napits*) to the members of the untouchable castes.<sup>102</sup> But untouchability would never be removed, he frequently told many of them, unless India achieved freedom.<sup>103</sup> So when the Civil Disobedience movement started in 1930, he gave an open call to the 'depressed classes' of Bengal to join the Congress. In return, he promised, the Congress volunteers would work for the elevation of their social status by accepting water

from their hands.<sup>104</sup> But the call only evoked mixed responses.

At the time of the Civil Disobedience movement, many of the advanced castes were responding favourably to the mobilizing efforts of the nationalists. The Mahishyas, as already noted, had in the meanwhile joined the Congress and were active participants in all its political movements. Many of the trading castes were also financing Congress agitations around this time.<sup>105</sup> Some of the 'depressed classes' also seemed enthusiastic, as Gandhi had attached top priority to the untouchability issue. But they were not over-optimistic or complacent; the high caste protagonists of *swaraj*, some of them suspected, would not really do anything unless put under concerted pressure.<sup>106</sup> This persistence of suspicion and rancour was not perhaps totally unjustified, as all Congress sympathies for the untouchables emanated from a basic feeling of upper caste superiority. The 'depressed classes', our "younger brothers", deserved from us, their "elder brothers", love, affection and sympathy, noted quite innocently a high caste Bengali nationalist in 1924.<sup>107</sup> "The purpose of my essay is not to suggest that from to-day onwards everyone should try to come closer to the lower castes through wedlocks", wrote a Bengali Hindu historian around the same time. "I only say, do not hate them any more".<sup>108</sup> The two statements only show how the innate assumptions of fundamental social unevenness and irreconcilable differences dominated the nationalist mind and thus lent credence to the colonial 'discourse of differentiation'. As a result, groups lower down the social hierarchy also responded in the way the colonial government wanted them to. They were alienated in varying degrees from the nationalist mainstream.

In this atmosphere of estrangement, the Bengali word *jati* began to acquire different meanings for different social groups. For the more prosperous Subarnabaniks, "*jatiya itihas*" ('national' history) remained as important as "*jatir itihas*" (history of the 'caste').<sup>109</sup> But to the Paundra-Kshatriyas, "*jatiya unnati*" meant primarily the advancement of the "caste", though eventually this might lead to the advancement of the "nation" as well.<sup>110</sup> In the mental world of the Namasudras and Rajbansis, on the other hand, 'caste' had decisively replaced 'nation', as rarely in their literature did the word mean anything else than only 'caste'.<sup>111</sup> The same language was thus communicating different messages to different people with varying levels of political consciousness. The editor of the Tili journal in 1918 left no room even for such linguistic ambiguities. In his instructions to the potential contributors, he asked them to keep in mind that their sole purpose of writing should

be to promote the upliftment of their "*jati*" or caste and not to seek the salvation of their "*desh*" or country.<sup>112</sup> The differences between the two streams of politics, therefore, seem to have been much wider than were imagined by some of the established nationalist leaders of the day.

#### IV

By 1930, with all the possibilities of their entitlement to government patronage being almost finally eliminated, the movements of most of the advanced and affluent castes either began to dissipate or continued as pure 'social' movements. As early as in 1920, the rules of the 'Sadgop Sabha' had clearly stipulated that the forum was not meant for any political discussion.<sup>113</sup> By the middle of the '20's, the 'Subarnabanik Sammilani' had also established its identity as a "pure caste conference" where politics could not be discussed.<sup>114</sup> The other organisations were less explicit on this point. But the fact that neither the discussions held nor the resolutions adopted in their conferences ever referred to either colonial rule or nationalist movement, suggests that they too had shunned politics and concentrated on social questions alone.<sup>115</sup>

But by this time the 'depressed classes' politics had taken a definite shape. In 1917 the All India Depressed Classes Association had been formed and this inspired many in Bengal as well. The first concrete initiative to establish such a common forum for the Bengal 'depressed classes' was taken by a Paundra Kshatriya leader Manindranath Mandal. Since 1918 he had been getting in touch with the leaders of the various articulate caste movements and published a series of articles advocating the establishment of such a general organisation. His idea was to have an association, like the one formed by the "Panchamas in Madras", which would follow the "principles and policies" of the Muslim League. Through his initiative, a conference was held at the City College hall in Calcutta on 5 February 1922. It was presided over by Bhishmadeb Das, the nominated representative of the 'depressed classes' in the Bengal legislature and was addressed by the celebrated leaders of almost all the major 'depressed' caste movements in the province. Even those who could not attend personally, sent their messages of solidarity. It was in this conference that a 'Bangiya Janasangha' or the 'Bengal Peoples' Association' was formed as a formal organisation of the 'depressed classes'. It was meant

to fight for the social and political rights of these classes, particularly to secure for them adequate representation in the self-governing bodies, in the legislative councils and in the public services. But the new organisation, in spite of the early enthusiasm, could not really take off the ground. Its life was cut short, as admitted by its progenitor himself, by the lack of committed volunteers, general apathy and mutual jealousies.<sup>116</sup>

The Scheme was again revived four years later. In a conference at Kanchrapara in 1926 the Bengal Depressed Classes Association was actually born, with the Namasudra leader Mukunda Behari Mullick as its first President. Through this organisation, the agitation of the Bengali 'depressed classes' gradually merged with their all-India movement. Around 1930, in the Executive Committee of their national body, Bengal was represented by Birat Chandra Mandal. In a meeting held on 13 July 1930 at Simla, it "emphatically" condemned Civil Disobedience movement "started by the extremists (sic) politicians in the country... to overthrow the British rule in India, and ... (called) upon the provincial associations to organise loyalist movements to fight this Civil Disobedience Movement with all their strength." The meeting also discussed the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission and "wholeheartedly" welcomed the announcement regarding the Round Table Conference. The Government was urged to give adequate representation to the 'depressed classes' in it. But the Commission's recommendation for the reservation of seats for the 'depressed classes' in joint electorates was criticised, as separate electorate was considered to be the safest method of returning an adequate number of true representatives from this section of the community. The meeting also opposed the immediate granting of dominion status to India, as demanded by the Congress, at least not until the blot of untouchability was completely removed.<sup>117</sup> Soon after this, the Bengal Depressed Classes Association also had a meeting, which greeted the Statutory Commission's Report as "a masterly survey of the real situation of this country and its affairs". It was particularly hailed as it had made "a proper and just note of the depressed classes". But at the same time joint electorate was criticised as "positively harmful".<sup>118</sup> Then in August 1930, the 'depressed classes' representatives in the Bengal Legislative Council voted against a resolution that recommended full dominion status for India.<sup>119</sup>

The first session of the Round Table Conference, boycotted by the Congress, took place in London between November 1930 and Jan-

uary 1931, amidst political turmoil in India caused by the Civil Disobedience movement. Dr. Ambedkar, the representative of the 'depressed classes' on the Indian delegation, was initially opposed to separate electorate. But he gradually moved towards it, as it was demanded by most of his comrades in India.<sup>120</sup> The All India Depressed Classes Leaders' Conference, where Bengal was represented by Rasiklal Biswas, met in Bombay on 19 May 1931. It appreciated the work done by their representatives on the Indian delegation to the Round Table Conference, welcomed the decision of the government to resume its session and demanded fair and adequate participation in it, so that the 'depressed classes' of every province could ventilate their grievances and "play their part in the settlement of the political adjustments in the future constitution of India." Moreover, as the Congress had always neglected the political rights of the 'depressed classes', they should be guaranteed, the meeting resolved, "their right as a minority to separate electorate".<sup>121</sup>

However, the very question of separate or joint electorate had also brought about a rift within the 'depressed classes' camp in early 1932. The Working Committee of the All India Depressed Classes Association, headed by M.C. Rajah, in a meeting in February deplored Dr. Ambedkar's demand for separate electorate and unanimously decided for joint electorate with Hindus, with reservation of seats on popular basis. An agreement was also reached to this effect between Rajah and Dr. B.S. Moonje, the President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha—the so-called Rajah-Moonje Pact.<sup>122</sup> The Ambedkar faction was also active and the Bengal group was with them. In May, about hundred such delegates met at Nagpur and adopted 12 resolutions. One of them supported Dr. Ambedkar's Minorities Pact regarding separate electorate as the irreducible minimum demand of the 'depressed classes' and another emphatically repudiated the Rajah-Moonje Pact. Interestingly, the first resolution, supporting separate electorate, was moved by Mukunda Behari Mullick from Bengal.<sup>123</sup> The acrimonious debate continued, as in July another All India Depressed Classes Conference met at Bombay under the presidency of M.C. Rajah. It upheld the Rajah-Moonje Pact and resolved in favour of joint electorate with reservation of seats.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile in Bengal, the Legislative Council on 2 August passed a resolution that recommended joint electorate to replace separate electorate in the future constitution of India.<sup>125</sup> But before this debate could go on further, the Communal Decision was announced, which



provided for 10 reserved seats in Bengal, to be filled in by the 'depressed classes', voting in special electorates. Caste Hindu reaction was sharp and bitter. They felt aggrieved as the number of seats open to them was much reduced and the separate electorate was likely to cut in a wedge into their political base. Several meetings were organised, the first of which took place in Calcutta on 20 August, presided over by Narendra Kumar Basu, M.L.C. It recorded a unanimous protest against the Award which, it alleged, was "aimed at striking a blow on nationalism and national unity in the country." Another meeting was held in the Town Hall, Calcutta, on 4 September and was presided over by Dr. Debaprasad Sarbadhikari, the former Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University. It adopted a number of resolutions, one of which described the Communal Award as "of a highly retrograde character, as it has deepened the foundation of communalism and has also extended the principle in new directions contrary to all enlightened and democratic ideas of the age."<sup>126</sup>

The 'depressed classes' leaders of Bengal, satisfied with the provision of separate electorate, were particularly unhappy with the number of seats allocated for them. In order to counteract caste Hindu propaganda against the Award, they also began to organise themselves. In 1932 an All Bengal Depressed Classes Federation was formed, which began to run parallel to the existing Association, the difference between the two being only that of personality rather than of philosophy. While the Association remained close to the Bengal Namasudra Association, both being headed by Mukunda Behari Mullick, the other caste organisations got affiliated to the new Federation.<sup>127</sup> Under the auspices of the latter, a special session of the All Bengal Depressed Classes Conference was held on 28 August, with the Rajbansi leader Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma at the chair and all other recognised leaders present. The conference resolved that the seats allocated for them were disproportionate to their population and pressed for additional seats to be guaranteed to them through separate electorate.<sup>128</sup> In continuation to this, a delegation of the 'depressed classes' members of the Legislative Council met the Governor and communicated their views on representation in the future constitution.<sup>129</sup> Apart from such organised efforts, Rai Sahib Panchanan Barma in a 'Note' to the government, at an individual level demanded that "as an essential protection of their rights", the 'depressed classes' or the Scheduled Castes, as they were now being called, "should get seats proportionate to their numerical strength", which should be at

least 27 out of 80 general seats. And "in the teeth of opposition by the people of advanced classes in a general constituency", he argued, the Scheduled Castes ultimately would have to "depend in the matter of coming to the Council on the special electorates."<sup>130</sup>

The whole agitation about Communal Award, however, took an abrupt turn with Gandhi's decision to fast unto death, unless the grant of separate electorates for the 'depressed classes' in the new constitution was withdrawn. The arrangement, he believed, would result in a permanent segregation of these classes from the Hindu community. The British Prime Minister believed that nothing of the sort was likely to happen, since the 'depressed classes' were included in the general Hindu constituencies as well; only, they would receive, through a limited number of special constituencies, the means of safeguarding their rights and interests. But Gandhi remained impervious to all these official arguments, and stood firm on his decision to fight a moral battle with the Raj on this issue.

The news of his decision and the anticipation of its possible consequences caused great perturbation in the minds of the Hindus of Bengal. Meetings were held and public appeals were issued to launch a campaign against untouchability and to open the doors of the temples to the 'depressed classes'.<sup>131</sup> A meeting of the nationalists among the 'depressed classes' was held at Town Hall, Calcutta, with Hem Chandra Naskar as the President. It resolved that the separate electorate by segregating the 'depressed classes' from the general Hindu community, would permanently stigmatize them and therefore, appealed to Gandhi to give up his fast and exert his influence to resolve the issue. Another nationalist meeting in Calcutta, participated by prominent leaders and celebrities, like Prafulla Chandra Ray, Nirmal Chandra Chunder, Basanti Devi, Nellie Sen Gupta, Ramananda Chatterjee, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee and others, resolved that the government should immediately change its policy to save the life of the Mahatma. Rabindranath Tagore organised a prayer at Santiniketan on 20 September, the day of the commencement of the fast, to save the life of Gandhi and to provide moral support to his noble mission of eliminating the shameful custom of untouchability. An appeal was issued, signed by eminent personalities of Bengal, including Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Nirmal Chunder, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, B.N. Sasmal and Ramananda Chatterjee, to do away with untouchability and other evil customs which had given the opportunity to the foreign rulers to disrupt the unity of the Hindus. The Kalighat temple

in Calcutta was for the first time opened to the untouchables in the presence of Congress volunteers led by Basanti Devi. Later, she also issued a statement, with an appeal to the people of Bengal to take a vow on the coming *Mahastami* day, to remove untouchability and unite the Hindu community, and thus fulfil the mission which her late husband had attached great importance to and for which Gandhi was now going to give up his life.<sup>132</sup>

The crisis, however, came to an end with the signing of the Poona Pact and its acceptance by the British government. The end of Gandhi's fast was hailed with feelings of relief by the Hindu community in Bengal. Tagore wrote a pungent piece by way of condemning the evil of untouchability and himself travelled to Poona to greet the Mahatma for the successful completion of his *punyabrata*, the noble mission of preventing by peaceful means a political schism in Indian society.<sup>133</sup> The Hindu press in Calcutta also welcomed the settlement, but did not attempt to analyse the details. Although the provisions of the pact were definitely prejudicial to the interests of the caste Hindus, the desire to save Gandhi's life was so great that no responsible Hindu leader dared to express disapproval or protest immediately.<sup>134</sup>

But that was not the consideration of the 'depressed classes' who were concerned more with what they considered to be their legitimate political rights. On 26 September, two days after the signing of the pact, an emergency joint meeting of the Bengal Depressed Classes Association and the All Bengal Namasudra Association opposed the Poona Pact, demanded separate electorate and held that the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes in Bengal was hopelessly inadequate in proportion to their numerical strength.<sup>135</sup> R.C. Ray, the Secretary of the Association, in an urgent telegram on the same day, communicated this disapproval to the Governor of Bengal.<sup>136</sup> The next day, the Federation, in a specially held joint meeting of the leaders of the 'depressed classes', also resolved that "the communal decision ... creating special electorate to the Depressed Classes is a political advantage unprecedented and unparalleled in the constitutional history of India and the Poona Settlement is Dr. Ambedkar's blunder ultimately leading to the political death of millions of people at the hands of the so-called caste Hindus". No one from the Bengal 'depressed classes', said the resolution, had authorised him to negotiate on their behalf.<sup>137</sup> But the Poona Pact, as they all gradually realised, was a *fait accompli* that could not be undone so easily. Hence

on 10 December, in an extra-ordinary meeting, the working committee of the Bengal Depressed Classes Association and the Central Committee of Bengal Namasudra Association decided to accept the settlement "as the next best thing for them".<sup>138</sup> Later, Amulyadhan Ray, the Secretary of the Federation, acknowledged in the Legislative Council, that they had also accepted the Pact "by necessity", though "not by choice".<sup>139</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, Gandhi was not prepared to stop at the political settlement arrived at Poona. As a logical extension to that, he thought of "setting up an agitation against untouchability from within prison walls". To him an agitation against untouchability was more important than even conducting the Civil Disobedience movement, although he preferred to leave it to the conscience of the Congress volunteers to decide as to which they should place priority on. Personally, however, he believed that no civil resistance would be successful unless this "age long evil" was removed first, and the untouchables, whom he now preferred to call Harijans (the children of God), were integrated with the Hindu community.<sup>140</sup> His first step in this direction was to take up the cause of the Madras Temple Entry Bill, proposed by Dr. Subbarayan and in December, he threatened to fast if sanction to the introduction of the bill was not granted by January.<sup>141</sup> Subsequently, however, he gave up the path of confrontation and requested the government "to facilitate the progress and passage" of the Madras bill as well as the Untouchability Abolition Bill proposed by Ranga Iyer, "in every way legitimately open to them."<sup>142</sup>

The Harijan programme of Gandhi was pursued in Bengal through the Provincial Board of the Servants of Untouchables Society, started early in 1933 with Satkaripati Roy as its Secretary. Under its auspices, welfare activities for the untouchables were undertaken at different parts of the province. Night schools were opened in Calcutta and in the districts of Birbhum, Midnapur, Jessore, Khulna and Faridpur for the Harijan boys and girls. In Calcutta, efforts were made to repay the debts incurred by the Harijans to the Kabuli moneylenders, and shops were opened in their slums for the sale of articles of daily necessity at nearly the cost price. The volunteers of the Society visited Harijan neighbourhoods in towns and villages to teach them cleanliness and sanitation, to persuade them to give up drinking and to provide them with primary education. Along with this, anti-untouchability propaganda meetings were held in different districts like Birbhum, Midnapur, Jessore, Khulna, Rajshahi, Pabna and Farid-

pur.<sup>143</sup> And to supervise all these programmes, in many of these places District Untouchability Removal Committees were formed under local Gandhite leaders and enthusiastic volunteers.<sup>144</sup>

But in spite of all these activities, there was "hardly any genuine interest" among the general people of Bengal, as in the other parts of India, in the untouchability problem.<sup>145</sup> Hence, on 30 April Gandhi announced his intention to undertake a twenty-one days' fast from 8 May, "in obedience to the peremptory call from within for reasons wholly unconnected with Government and solely connected with the Harijan movement".<sup>146</sup> After this, he decided to undertake a tour of the whole of India, starting from Delhi in December, then covering the whole of the Madras Presidency, proceeding via Orissa to Bengal, Assam, Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Sind, Rajputana, Gujrat, Maharashtra and ending in Karnataka in the end of July 1934.<sup>147</sup> Bengal was supposed to be visited at the beginning of February and on that occasion a high-powered reception committee was formed with most of the leading members of the Congress as well as the prominent members of the Harijan movement, who chalked out an active programme for Gandhi.<sup>148</sup>

But for various reasons Gandhi's movement did not arouse much enthusiasm in Bengal. Till now the major goal of his Harijan programme had been the "removal of the extreme form of untouchability" and not to launch, at least for the time being, "an attack on caste".<sup>149</sup> Untouchability, he believed, was "a sin and the greatest blot on Hinduism", and therefore it had to go. Otherwise, he apprehended, Hinduism would die. The caste system in its present form, he believed, was a later day distortion of the *varnashrama* of the Vedas, which was based on "absolute equality of status". There was no prohibition on intermarriage or interdining; the only restriction referred to the change of hereditary occupation. "Hinduism", as his faith was, "will once again shine forth if.... the pristine *varna* system is resurrected.... This would be to the good of India as well as the world". This would imply that "occupations will be restricted as they were in the past", but there would be no prohibition on intermarriage and interdining across *varna* lines.<sup>150</sup> This philosophy, which Gandhi subsequently worked out in the pages of *Harijan*, could hardly appeal to the Bengalis. First of all, untouchability *per se* was never much of a problem here. Nor could the caste Hindus be expected to be very enthusiastic about the obliteration of marriage and dining restrictions. Some of the orthodox Hindus even considered Gandhi's movement to be "an undue

interference" in their religious life, as untouchability, they thought, was "an integral part of Hindu dharma".<sup>151</sup> Some of Gandhi's extreme statements, such as the description of the Bihar earthquake of 1934 as a providential punishment for the sin of untouchability, actually evoked severe criticism from the Bengal intelligentsia, including Rabindranath Tagore.<sup>152</sup> Even the lowest caste elites would feel less attraction for his philosophy, as his suggestion of going back to the *varna* system would certainly stifle their upward social mobility. They would even object, as some of them did, to the use of the term 'Harijan', which had acquired a derogatory meaning and marked these people out as a special category, the lowest of the low. Gandhi was aware of some of these objections, but his instinctive and emotional responses could hardly dispel the distrust.<sup>153</sup> Jogendranath Mandal, for example, in his Presidential Address in the first conference (1945) of the Bengal Provincial Scheduled Caste Federation, criticised Gandhi for using the term 'Harijan', as it implied, he thought, that these people were not fit to be regarded as parts of human society. The whole business of Harijan movement, Mandal blasted out, was "nothing but a great bluff, an ingenious method of avoiding the real problem".<sup>154</sup>

In Bengal what had further contributed to the political alienation of the Scheduled Castes was the orthodox Hindu backlash against the Poona Pact and the untouchability removal movement at the beginning of 1933. This orthodox opposition to the Poona Pact was mounting since December 1932, when twenty-five Hindu M.L.C.s. had sent a telegram to the Prime Minister, followed by another telegram from Satyendranath Sen, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly. On 11 January, an All Parties Bengalee Hindu Conference was held at Calcutta under the presidency of Bepin Behari Ghosh. It requested the Prime Minister to revoke his acceptance of the arrangement so far as Bengal was concerned, for it was "arrived at without consulting any Hindus of Bengal" and the number of seats reserved was "out of all proportion to the real needs of the province".<sup>155</sup> A few days later, on 24 January, a delegation of six Hindu M.L.C.s, led by B.C. Chatterjee, met the Governor of Bengal and requested him to communicate to the Prime Minister their disapproval of the Poona Pact, which was arrived at in an atmosphere of "moral coercion". Moreover, no responsible representative from Bengal was invited, except Rasiklal Biswas, "a man with a certain following among the Depressed Classes". And the net effect of the pact in Bengal, they pointed out, was "a reduction of caste Hindu seats in largely increased House".<sup>156</sup>

The climax of the whole agitation came in March 1933, when Jitendralal Banerjee, known in the Non-co-operation days as a committed follower of Gandhi, moved in the Legislative Council a resolution, which said that the Poona Pact "is unacceptable in the peculiar circumstances of Bengal, that it is injurious to the interests of the Hindu community of this province and subversive of their solidarity" and "therefore, the Prime Minister should be pleased to revise and withdraw his acceptance of the same so far as this province is concerned". The resolution was eloquently supported by the other Hindu members, like S.M. Bose, Ananda Mohan Poddar and Naresh Chandra Sen Gupta and opposed tooth and nail by the representatives of the 'depressed classes'. Amulyadhan Ray called it a "Brahmatrical fraud", for the Pact was the creation of the caste Hindus "thrust" upon the 'depressed classes'. He further announced that Gandhi, in response to his letter, had assured him that "the Pact cannot be revised without the unanimous consent of all the parties concerned". Mukunda Behari Mullick also recorded his "emphatic protest against the resolution". He objected to the contention that Bengal was unrepresented by pointing out that eminent personalities like Swami Satyananda of the Hindu Mission, Haridas Mazumdar of Amrita Samaj, Pramathanath Banerjee of Midnapur and Satish Chandra Das Gupta of Khadi Pratisthan were present at Poona when the Pact was being negotiated. But in spite of all this, the resolution was carried by 36 to 27 votes, with all the caste Hindu members except Aukshay Kumar Sen voting in favour of the resolution and all the seven 'depressed classes' members and the Muslim members, with the solitary exception of Maulavi Abdus Samad, voting against it.<sup>157</sup> Amulyadhan Ray later described it as the triumph of a "determined combination of the *Zamindars*, moneylenders and the caste Hindus against the depressed classes". The very fact that the caste Hindus voted on one side and all the seven Scheduled Caste representatives on the other, he argued, "showed the necessity of our special representation and the truth of our allegation that caste prejudices are being reflected in political matters".<sup>158</sup> Hence, when the Local Self-Government Second Amendment Bill came before the Council, Ray demanded for the 'depressed classes' the rights of a minority community and representation through nomination in the municipalities.<sup>159</sup>

The Scheduled Castes of Bengal more and more rallied round the Poona Pact as a reaction to this mounting orthodox Hindu opposition to it. Rasiklal Biswas who had become the Secretary of the All India

Depressed Classes Federation and claimed himself to be "one of the authors of the said pact", pointed out that the "30 seats allotted to the Bengal depressed classes were calculated on the basis of their population..."<sup>160</sup> The Bengal Federation as a counteractive measure against the orthodox Hindu agitation, sent a deputation to the Governor on 3 August 1934 and organised public meetings at Bongaon in December 1934 and at Jhenida in July 1935.<sup>161</sup> But meanwhile the classification of the Scheduled Castes for the electoral purposes had started and this added new complexities to the whole situation.

Some of the caste Hindus like Suklal Nag considered this classification procedure as "dangerous and derogatory", as it might lead to a "political caste system". To him, therefore, it was "not reform but retrogression".<sup>162</sup> But in Bengal the main opposition to this procedure hinged on the criterion of classification, i.e. 'social and political backwardness' which replaced the untouchability test applied in other parts of India. Had this test been applied as recommended by the Simon Commission or the Lothian Committee, thought N.K. Basu, an M.L.C., there would have been "virtually no depressed classes in Bengal". The 'Bangiya Brahman Sabha' believed that there was no caste in Bengal which was "of depressed political condition". The Indian Association described the provisional list of Scheduled castes announced by the Bengal Government in January, as "illogical and based on no principle", while according to Hindu Sabha, it defied "the application of all accepted standards of social backwardness."<sup>163</sup> Along with these organised protests, individual caste Hindu members of the Legislative Council, like Bhupendra Narayan Sinha, B.C. Chatterjee, Jitendralal Banerjee and Satish Chandra Roy Choudhuri also put up a barrage of critical questions that touched upon the various objectionable aspects of the classification procedure.<sup>164</sup>

Among the lower castes also there were widespread protests against inclusion in the provisional list of Scheduled Castes. Meetings were convened at various centres at which resolutions against inclusion were passed. Such meetings were widely reported in the press and largely signed representations were forwarded to the government by the Suklis, Rajus, Kalwars, Pods, Naths (Jogis) and Sutradhars.<sup>165</sup> The Pods were divided on the question, as there were representations both for and against inclusion.<sup>166</sup> Some of the members of the Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti were also initially opposed to the Rajbansis being branded as a Scheduled Caste. But the dispute was later resolved through Panchanan Barma's persuasion and his careful exposition of the possible



advantages of reservation.<sup>167</sup> The Naths or Jogis were, on the other hand, united against inclusion and in view of their protest as well as their educational attainments, they were not included in the list of Scheduled Castes.<sup>168</sup> The Sutradhars also protested in unison against their inclusion in the provisional list and consequently the name of their caste was written off.<sup>169</sup> So were the Mahishyas, as they were considered to be "sufficiently advanced to require no protection".<sup>170</sup> The only major articulate movement for inclusion came from the Sundis, who passed a resolution in a representative meeting held at Calcutta, expressing their alarm at the rumour of their being excluded from the list of Scheduled Castes which they thought would go against their interests.<sup>171</sup> And consequently, they were included in the final list.

However, most of the movements against inclusion in the list of Scheduled Castes were due to the prevailing idea that this would affect the social prestige of the castes. Little attention was paid to the educational or political backwardness of the members of the castes and the necessity of securing for them special representation in the reformed constitution.<sup>172</sup> The Association of the 'depressed classes' also thought that such agitations were "only against the term 'depressed' giving a heinous and low connotation". It was also the result, it pointed out, of the "mischievous activities" of the Hindu Mahasabha. In fact, on 20 January 1933, the Mahasabha had issued a circular to all the castes, requesting their members to protest against their being branded as 'depressed' and their representative associations were urged to convene emergency meetings without delay and convey to the Government of Bengal their considered opinion on this matter. The Association protested against such "manipulations" and requested the government not to attach any importance to such cooked up representations.<sup>173</sup> The Federation also noted "with deep regret that Hindu Sabha is taking advantage of illiteracy and ignorance of the members of the depressed classes and misleading them to take off their names from the list". The Provincial Hindu Sabha was branded as "a sister organization of the Congress" with "conflicting political interests with the depressed classes." The Government was, therefore, requested not to accept their opinion regarding the inclusion or exclusion of any particular caste.<sup>174</sup>

The other problem that attracted the attention of the leaders of the 'depressed classes' was their weak representation in the public services, both ministerial and executive, although the Poona Pact had stipulated that such representation should be provided for. They raised

Depressed Classes Federation and claimed himself to be "one of the authors of the said pact", pointed out that the "30 seats allotted to the Bengal depressed classes were calculated on the basis of their population."<sup>60</sup> The Bengal Federation as a counteractive measure against the orthodox Hindu agitation, sent a deputation to the Governor on 3 August 1934 and organised public meetings at Bongaon in December 1934 and at Jhenuda in July 1935.<sup>61</sup> But meanwhile the classification of the Scheduled Castes for the electoral purposes had started and this added new complexities to the whole situation.

Some of the caste Hindus like Suklal Nag considered this classification procedure as 'dangerous and derogatory', as it might lead to a 'political caste system'. To him, therefore, it was not reform but retrogression.<sup>62</sup> But in Bengal the main opposition to this procedure hinged on the criterion of classification, i.e. 'social and political backwardness' which replaced the untouchability test applied in other parts of India. Had this test been applied as recommended by the Simon Commission or the Colman Committee, thought N.K. Basu, an M.L.C., there would have been "virtually no depressed classes in Bengal". The 'Bangiya Brahman Sabha' believed that there was no caste in Bengal which was "of depressed political condition". The Indian Association described the provisional list of Scheduled castes announced by the Bengal Government in January, as "illogical and based on no principle", while according to Hindu Sabha, it defied "the application of all accepted standards of social backwardness."<sup>63</sup> Along with these organised protests, individual caste Hindu members of the Legislative Council, like Bhupendra Narayan Sinha, B.C. Chatterjee, Jitendra Nath Banerjee and Saush Chandra Roy Choudhuri also put up a barrage of critical questions that touched upon the various objectionable aspects of the classification procedure.<sup>64</sup>

Among the lower castes also there were widespread protests against inclusion in the provisional list of Scheduled Castes. Meetings were convened at various centres at which resolutions against inclusion were passed. Such meetings were widely reported in the press and largely signed representations were forwarded to the government by the Suklis, Kajus, Kaiwars, Pous, Naths (Jogis) and Sutradhars.<sup>65</sup> The Pous were divided on the question, as there were representations both for and against inclusion.<sup>66</sup> Some of the members of the Rangpur Kshatriya Sabha were also initially opposed to the Rajbansis being branded as Scheduled Castes. But the dispute was later resolved through Chittaranjan Das's persuasion and his careful exposition of the

advantages of reservation.<sup>167</sup> The Naths or Jogis were 'of country' by hand, united against inclusion and in view of their protest against a Nam-their educational attainments, they were not included in the list of Scheduled Castes.<sup>168</sup> The Sutradhars also protested in 1931 against inclusion in the provisional list and consequently the caste was written off.<sup>169</sup> So were the Mahishvas. And, the tenancy sidered to be "sufficiently advanced to require no special treatment" only major articulate movement for inclusion came early in the pages who passed a resolution in a representative meeting of the Council. In July expressing their alarm at the rumour of their exclusion from the 'depressed list of Scheduled Castes which they thought was to the tenancy legisla-interests.<sup>171</sup> And consequently, they were added to the under-raiyats. The

However, most of the movements considered it necessary to give Scheduled Castes were due to the prevailing conditions in order to free them from the social prestige of the castes. Little attention was paid to this, other agrarian demands, cational or political backwardness of the masses or amelioration of food scar-the necessity of securing for them special provisions in the speeches of the 'depressed constitution.<sup>172</sup> The Association of the 'depressed' leaders, at least in their use that such agitations were 'only around the established structure of social a heinous and low caste status'. These cases in mobilizing the masses of the "mischievous activities" were definitely true as far as some of 20 January 1933. The Association of the 'depressed' were 'only around' the established support base 'of the masses'.

They began to forget their own interests and to ignore the masses, and to ignore the election. So occa-sionally they raised issues, as the neces-sity of the existing tenancy system for the 'depressed classes' and a resolution that the Council "to exer-cise its power by Maulavi and by the progressive provi-sion of a transfer fee, right of the 'depressed' of Bengal", and by Adhan Ray in support of the res-olution to "earn the goodwill of their tenants" and the Council "a character certificate in their favour by voting in favour of this resolu-

this issue in the Legislative Council over and over again, and often they were opposed by the orthodox caste Hindu members. Mukunda Behari Mullick, for example, raised his complaint in March 1931, that "even when our condidates are qualified under the rules, their claims are superseded for reasons best known to the authorities concerned." Hence in a resolution, he demanded "proper provision for the appointment of candidates belonging to the backward classes", and his motion was supported by such other liberal minded members as Maulvi Syed Jalaluddin Hashemy, Keshab Chandra Banerjee, Santisekhareswar Ray, Dr. Naresh Chandra Sen Gupta and Narendra Kumar Basu. But Jitendralal Banerjee added "a jarring note" to the discussion. "You may show as much sympathy for the depressed classes as you will", he thundered, "but why should you show it at the cost of tax payer and the general public.....(and) of the efficiency of the public services?" The motion at last was defeated with 26 votes cast in favour and 44 against.<sup>175</sup> But this was not the only occasion when the issue was raised in the Council. The other legislators from the 'depressed classes', like Rai Sahib Rebati Mohan Sarkar, Amulyadhan Ray and Sarat Chandra Bal continued to hammer the government representatives with questions as to why the memorandum on reserved quota for the 'depressed classes' in ministerial appointments was not being properly implemented or what other steps were being contemplated to provide for more appointments for the Scheduled Castes or to give effect to the clauses 8 and 9 of the Poona Pact.<sup>176</sup> And then, in October 1934, the Association appealed to the government to revise its recruitment rules in order to reserve for the Scheduled Castes 20 per cent of posts in all public services—a request promptly turned down by the Government.<sup>177</sup>

## V

Prior to their being involved so deeply in constitutional debates from the beginning of the 1930's the urban middle class leadership of the 'depressed classes' movements could hardly afford to forget their rural masses who constituted, in a real sense, their political base. This mass support was all the more necessary for them as in this politics for reservation it was the strength of numbers which would really count. Hence these leaders often projected themselves as the champions of the peasants' cause and tried to evolve a caste ideology by articulating their class grievances. For this purpose, they constantly harped

on the exploitation and harassment of the 'low caste peasantry' by the 'high caste landlords' and the *bhadralok* politicians.<sup>178</sup> At a Namasudra conference, for example, in 1922, the government was urged to pay more attention to the development of agriculture, as well as to the enactment of a comprehensive legislation to determine the landlord-tenant relationship. If possible, it was demanded, the tenancy legislation should be so amended as to declare the peasants the owners of the land.<sup>179</sup> Similar demands also featured regularly in the pages of *Kshatriya*<sup>180</sup> and were raised in the Legislative Council. In July 1921, Bhishmadeb Das, the nominated representative of the 'depressed classes', had demanded suitable amendments to the tenancy legislation to protect the rights of the *raiya*s and the under-*raiya*s. The "movement of time", he argued, "has rendered it necessary to give a higher and better status to the *raiya*s", in order to free them from the clutches of the landlords. Apart from this, other agrarian demands, such as the prevention of crop failures or amelioration of food scarcity in villages, also figured frequently in the speeches of the 'depressed classes' legislators.<sup>181</sup> As some of these leaders, at least in their use of popular rhetoric, proposed to alter the established structure of social authority, they did succeed in certain cases in mobilizing the masses in support of their politics. This was definitely true as far as some of the Namasudra and Rajbansi leaders were concerned.<sup>182</sup> And so it was these two communities which provided the main support base for the 'depressed classes' politics in Bengal.

But from the 1930's even these leaders also began to forget their peasant followers. Of course, they could not totally ignore the masses, who would form their constituencies in the coming election. So occasionally they continued to mention such peasant issues, as the necessity of clearing irrigation canals and of amending the existing tenancy legislation. On 12 February 1933, a meeting of the 'depressed classes' was held at the Town Hall in Jessore. It adopted a resolution that appealed to the members of the Bengal Legislative Council "to exercise their vote in favour of the resolution to be moved by Maulavi Tamizuddin Khan for the repeal" of some of the oppressive provisions of the previous Rent Act regarding landlords' transfer fee, right to preemption and enhancement of rent. "The zamindars of Bengal", said the Namasudra legislator Amulyadhan Ray in support of the resolution on 20 February, "should earn the goodwill of their tenants" and the other members of the Council "a character certificate in their favour for the future election by voting in favour of this resolu-

tion".<sup>183</sup> Apart from this, in view of the severe economic depression, in 1930-31 the Rajbansi leader Rai Sahib Panikharan Barma had also taken up the issue of the *ijaradari* system, which was in vogue in the Cooch Behar state since the provisional survey settlement of 1872-75. The system as it functioned, he argued in a long report to the President of the Eastern State Agency, only helped the moneylenders and substantial peasants in their land-grabbing efforts at the expense of the middle and the lower peasantry. But when the system was finally scrapped it helped only the landowning *jotdars*. The problems of the under-*rai-yats* and *adhiars* did not any more attract the attention of these caste leaders. Indeed, many of these leaders themselves belonged to this rich peasant category and were so distressed by the depression that they really had no time and mood to think about the lesser peasants. And to many of them, as the Rajbansi leader Upendranath Barman himself acknowledged later, constitutional politics and Council elections held out a promise for financial solvency.<sup>184</sup>

Other issues concerning the rural poor, such as aid for the ill-equipped village hospitals, were also taken up by these leaders from time to time. Such hospitals, argued the emotionally charged Panikharan Barma on one occasion, catered for "the needs of a large number of people who were without medical help and many of whom might have died but for this medical help."<sup>185</sup> Yet, barring these occasional public meetings, one or two appeals or reports, or a few Council questions, there was nothing more on their cards for the rural poor. There was a marked decline in mass mobilization efforts and organisational work at the grassroots level. The reservation of seats in the legislature, public services and educational institutions, which these leaders were looking for, had already been provided in the new constitutional arrangement. So for them the necessity for numbers was over and therefore they could, as some of them might have thought, ignore the masses. In electoral politics it was difficult to bypass the masses totally. Hence, these leaders continued to pay lip sympathy to peasant grievances, projected themselves as "representatives of the peasants" and also included some peasant issues in their election manifestos.<sup>186</sup> But in spite of all these symbolic gestures, many of them, more engrossed in constitutional politics, had to pay dearly for this neglect of the masses, as some of these sitting legislators were unseated in the election of 1937. But this did not bring about any fundamental change in the nature of the 'depressed classes' politics. Nor were the lower caste masses brought any nearer to the political main-



stream as a result of this, as for them the menu for choice was still very limited.

As the election approached, the other political parties also made vigorous attempts to secure the support of the cultivating classes. For the Congress, the main propaganda item was still the Communal Award. A largely attended meeting was held in Calcutta in the middle of 1936, where the principal speaker was Rabindranath Tagore. It issued a memorial against the Communal Award. In support of it the Congress later organised meetings in the interior, particularly in districts like Nadia, Birbhum, Mymensingh, Chittagong and Tippera. The Hindu press lent a strong support to the movement and the signatories to the Memorial; curiously enough, included some of the die-hard leaders of the Scheduled Castes, such as Mukunda Behari Mullick or Rasiklal Biswas. But in spite of that, it evoked little response from the rural masses in general and the Scheduled Castes in particular.<sup>187</sup> In the elections, the Congress put up some candidates for the Scheduled Caste seats, but the results subsequently proved that they had not made much headway into this 'block of votes'.

Among the other political parties, the Muslim League was exclusively a communal organisation upholding communal interests. But the Krishak Praja Party, led by A.K. Fazlul Huq, was not a pure Muslim Party, as it had a large Scheduled Caste base, built up for over two decades in parts of eastern Bengal. The Workers' and Peasants' Party, founded in 1929, had perhaps made the first serious attempt to mobilize the masses in Bengal along class lines and around a secular philosophy. But its urban intellectual leadership, though many of them had marked leftist leanings, could not make much headway.<sup>188</sup> So it was indeed the *praja* movement, started in Jamalpur, Mymensingh in 1914, that first offered a real non-Congress platform for the political mobilization of the Bengal peasantry, irrespective of caste and creed. Its initial Congress connection had also been almost completely severed by 1928 and some of its early demands, such as for the abolition of *zamindari*, prohibition of illegal exactions and reduction of rent, had an irresistible appeal to the low caste peasantry of eastern and northern Bengal. As a result, in the 1920's Praja Samitis came up in almost every district of this region. In 1929 was formed the Nikhil Banga Praja Samiti, which changed its name into the Krishak Praja Party in 1936. But to lower caste peasantry, many of whom were share-croppers and under-tenants, it ultimately failed to offer any real mass-oriented alternative to either the elite politics of the Congress

or the sectarian politics of the caste associations. First of all, it began to champion the rich peasant interests, thus becoming primarily a representative of the power of the newly emerging *jotdar*-moneylending classes in the Bengal countryside.<sup>189</sup> It could not even avoid a communal colour, as the majority of its members were the Muslim peasants of eastern Bengal. The polarisation of Bengal politics between the Hindus (represented by Congress) and the Muslims being almost complete by the 1930's, it decided to refrain from contesting the general seats in the coming election. It also could not think of contesting the Scheduled Caste seats, as in that case it would have been difficult to withstand the League propaganda that the Muslim League was the only representative of Muslim interests.<sup>190</sup> In other words, the Muslim League and the Krishak Praja Party became the two contenders for the Muslim votes, and for doing so, the latter had to abandon its Scheduled Caste base. The Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, with which many of the Socialists and Communists were associated, could have been another viable alternative for the low caste peasants. But it had come into existence only in March 1937 and even by 1938-39, it had just about 50,000 members all over Bengal.<sup>191</sup> Thus to the lower caste masses of this province the choice was really limited and this was amply reflected in the election results of 1937.

The primary election for the Scheduled Caste seats was held on 21 November 1936. It was orderly and without great excitement, as only 27 per cent of the registered voters went to cast their votes, in spite of the unsuited timings, uncomfortable cold weather and the puzzling new 'symbol' system. But greater interest was stored for the general elections, held in January 1937, when the Scheduled Castes for the first time contested for reserved seats and 40.5 per cent of the registered voters exercised their franchise.<sup>192</sup> Majority of the reserved seats were captured by non-Congress candidates; in addition to that, in a non-reserved seat a Scheduled Caste candidate defeated a caste Hindu Congress nominee, while in another constituency a Congressite Scheduled Caste candidate captured a non-reserved seat. Several eminent leaders of the Scheduled Castes and sitting members of the Council, like Amulyadhan Ray or Sarat Chandra Bal were defeated,<sup>193</sup> while those who were victorious as independent candidates included such prominent names as Mukunda Behari Mullick, Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, Birat Chandra Mandal, Jogendranath Mondal (all Namasudras), Prasanna Deb Raikat, Shyama Prasad



Barman and Upendranath Barman (all Rajbansis). Curiously enough, Rasiklal Biswas came out victorious with a Congress ticket, while Hem Chandra Naskar won the election as an independent candidate.<sup>194</sup> There were now altogether 32 representatives of the Scheduled Castes in the new Assembly and their political affiliation was: Congress 7, Independent 23 and Hindu Sabha 2. So far as the general composition of the Assembly was concerned, there was first of all an eight-fold political division, consisting of the Congress(54), Independent Caste Hindus(14), Independent Scheduled Castes(23), Hindu Nationalists(3), Hindu Sabha(2), Muslim League(40), Krishak Praja Party(38), Independent Muslims(43) and Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians(31) (total 248, two of them being returned from two constituencies each). But apart from these divisions, there were also three distinct social groups (excluding the Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians), the Caste Hindus, the Scheduled Caste Hindus and the Muslims.<sup>195</sup> All these divisions had to be taken into account in the subsequent ministry-formation.

The Congress, with fifty-four members and with some support among the independent Hindus, definitely formed the largest political unit in the Assembly. There was a lot of speculation as to how the various groups in the Assembly would combine together and more particularly, whether the Congress would be able to align with the independent Hindus, Hindu Sabha and above all with the Praja Party to form a ministry. Such a combination would have had a clear majority in the Assembly. And there were also negotiations between the Congress and the Praja Party for the formation of a coalition government. But it broke down on the issue of the release of the political prisoners. Later, the events took an entirely different course and the coalition which Fazlul Haq was able to effect between the Muslim League, the Prajas and a number of influential independents, relegated Congress to the role of opposition. The eleven member cabinet that assumed office, with Fazlul Huq as the Chief Minister, included six Muslims and five Hindus. And among those five Hindus, two belonged to the Scheduled Castes: Mukunda Behari Mullick became the Minister for Co-operative Credit and Rural Indebtedness, and Prasanna Deb Raikat the Minister for Forest and Excise. Maharaja Srish Chandra Nandi also received the portfolio of Communications and Works. But the Tilis, the caste he belonged to, were no longer on the list of Scheduled Castes. The other two Hindu ministers were B.P.Singh Roy (Revenue) and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar(Finance). On the

whole the new cabinet met with good reception, although there was naturally some grumbling as well. Particularly dissatisfied were the members of the Praja Party, as they secured only two seats, including that of the Chief Minister.<sup>196</sup> Some of the Muslims thought that too much favour had been shown to the Hindus, particularly as Mukunda Mullick had been taken in by disregarding the claim of no less a person than H.S. Suhrawardy.<sup>197</sup> *The Amritabazar Patrika*, on the other hand, congratulated Fazlul Huq for the equitable division of the cabinet between the two communities.<sup>198</sup>

## VI

The process of the politicization of caste, in addition to religion, was now virtually complete. Caste was no more a mere socio-cultural category, but in every sense an interest-group, a rallying symbol for the political mobilization of a large section of the Hindu community. In addition to inter-personal or primary group relations, now caste had also come to determine the secondary group relations of the Bengali Hindus — the two spheres complementing and reinforcing each other. The colonial policy of 'protective discrimination' had borne its expected results. The movements of the *ajalchal* and *antyaja* castes that had started in Bengal in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries with social aspirations and a spirit of protest against the existing social imbalances, ultimately turned into what may be called a politics for reservation. The leaders of these movements gradually became more interested in concessions that could hardly benefit the masses whose socio-economic backwardness was ironically their major political capital. But even in spite of that, as the election results of 1936-37 show, they did not become totally unacceptable to the wider Scheduled Caste population. The phenomenon indicates the latter's alienation from the mainstream of national politics. This was partly due to colonial policy and partly due to the absence of any alternative social or economic programme coming from the nationalists or the caste Hindus. The net result was the estrangement of a sizeable section of the Hindu community, which weakened the freedom struggle almost in the same way, although less effectively, as the Muslim separatist politics.

By 1937, the 'depressed classes' politics in Bengal had thus assumed a distinct shape. In 1938, the Scheduled Caste members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly founded the Independent Scheduled Caste Party

with Hemchandra Naskar as its President and Jogendranath Mandal as the Secretary.<sup>199</sup> In 1942, Dr. Ambedkar organised the All India Scheduled Caste Federation. In its first conference held at Nagpur in July 1924, it was resolved that no constitution would be acceptable to the Scheduled Castes unless "it recognises the fact that the *Scheduled Castes are distinct and separate from the Hindus* and constitute an important element in the national life of India."<sup>200</sup> The next year, its Bengal branch was opened.<sup>201</sup> In April 1945 in its first Provincial Conference at Gopalganj in Faridpur, Jogendranath Mandal announced in his Presidential Address that the "first and foremost aim" of the Federation would be to establish "the *separate political identity*" of the Scheduled Castes.<sup>202</sup> Within the last two years the new organisation had already spread its tentacles far and wide, with the establishment of local units at the district, sub-division, *thana* and union levels. By the mid-'40's, so well known was the organised power of the Bengal Scheduled Castes, that Dr. Ambedkar, in view of the uncertainties of his Maharashtra base, decided to bank on their support for his election to the Constituent Assembly in 1946.<sup>203</sup>

This search for a separate political identity by the Scheduled Caste leaders, if pursued vigorously, could have really a disastrous impact on the future course of Bengal politics, as the formation of the Muslim League had after 1906. But this new development did not in the same way impede the progress of the nationalist movement in the '40's, as the emergence of the 'depressed classes' movement, or for that matter of the Scheduled Caste Federation, did not signify the rise of a third organised political force in Bengal. The Scheduled Castes operated essentially as an interest group, with the established political parties negotiating with its leaders and actually winning many of them over at different junctures. Some in course of time joined hands with the Congress, a few came closer to the Hindu Mahasabha, while Jogen Mandal, in spite of his well-known connection with the Congress and with Subhash Bose, later aligned himself with the Muslim League, alienating in the process many of his erstwhile comrades.<sup>204</sup> What further weakened the movement was the growing disjuncture between the aspirations of the elites and the grievances of the masses, with the latter gradually losing interest in the politics of the former. The reasons are not quite far to seek. Of the seven major demands put forth in the first provincial conference of the Federation, only one had any relevance to peasant interests, while the rest dealt with either institutional concessions or constitutional rights.<sup>205</sup> The protest of the

lower caste masses in this situation sought outlet through other more class-oriented movements. The Congress, it is true, had only succeeded in accommodating some of the elite leaders within its fold. Its failure to mobilize the Scheduled Caste masses was still quite manifest, as Gandhi himself acknowledged in a meeting at Calcutta with the Bengali Scheduled Caste legislators in 1938.<sup>206</sup> But from this time onwards, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha had begun to cut into the support base of the Scheduled Caste movement by organising the lesser peasantry on class lines. The pressures of the severe depression of the 1930's slowly ruptured the community bonds and in places, particularly in northern Bengal where the share-croppers' movement was gathering strength, the common Scheduled Caste identity of the *jotdars* and the *adhiars* could not ultimately forestall the inevitable conflict between the two classes in the 1940's.<sup>207</sup> In other words, in all these various ways, the Scheduled Caste politics in Bengal since the late 1930's had been developing its own dynamics as well as contradictions. All these later developments in the movement require in their own right a separate in-depth study which is beyond the scope of the present book, concerned primarily with the formative stage and the socio-cultural roots of the movement.

#### NOTES

1. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Part II, p.379; *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I, pp.285, 296, 412-431.
2. S.N. Mukherjee, 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta', in E.R. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, (eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, (Cambridge, 1970), pp.70-71.
3. The rules of the 'Sadgop Sabha' had categorically laid down that only the Sadgops could become members of this association. See, *Sadgop Sabhar Niyam-abali*, (in Bengali), (Chandernagore, 1327 B.S.), p.7.
4. See Appendix I.
5. *Mahishya Samaj*, Baisakh, Jaistha, Bhadra, Agrahayan 1318 B.S.; Jaistha, Aswin 1321 B.S.; *Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*, Aswin-Kartik, Magh-Falgun 1332 B.S.; Jaistha-Ashadh, Magh-Falgun 1333 B.S.; Jaistha-Ashadh 1334 B.S.; *Kshatriya*, Jaistha-Ashadh, Sraban-Bhadra 1327 B.S.; Baisakh, Paush, 1331 B.S.; *Jog-isakha*, Baisakh 1311 B.S.; Bhadra 1312 B.S.; Ashadh, Sraban 1313 B.S.; Jaistha 1328 B.S.; *Kalpadrurn*, Kartik-Agrahayan 1285 B.S.; Sashi Bhusan Nandi Barma, *Kayastha Purnan*, (in Bengali), Second Edition, edited by Girishchandra Vidyalankar, (Calcutta, 1335 B.S.), pp.338-463; Prakash Chandra Sarkar,

- collected and edited, *Gobardhan Kṛita Brihat Mahishya-Karika*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1931), Introduction; Saratchandra Biswas, *Sadgopjati*, Part III, (in Bengali), (Chandemagore, 1328 B.S.), pp. 100-105; Nabinchandra Ghosh, *Gop-jatir Kshatriyatva*, (in Bengali), (Mymensingh, 1331 B.S.), pp. 2-4, 60-67.
6. Lucy Carroll, 'Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Association', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 2, February 1978, p. 243.
7. Report (of the enquiry made to investigate the desirability of appointing a special officer to look after the interests of the depressed classes in Bengal), GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No. 5M-114 of 1928, February 1930, Progs. Nos. 7-20.
8. For more details see Hitesranjan Sanyal, 'Congress Movements in the Villages of Eastern Midnapore, 1921-1931', in Marc Gaborieau and Alice Thoner, (eds.), *Asie Du sud Traditions Et Changements*, (Paris, 1979), p. 173.
9. *Eighth Annual Report of the Kshatriya Samiti*, published by the Kshatriya Samiti, (Rangpur, 1325 B.S.), p. 57; Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibanchari*, (in Bengali), (Jalpaiguri, 1387 B.S.), pp. 16, 29; Swaraj Basu, 'Caste Mobility in Northern Bengal: A study of the Rajbansi Movement in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, 1891-1921', (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Calcutta University, 1986), pp. 39, 42, 45.
10. *Kshatriya*, Sraban-Bhadra, 1327 B.S., Jaistha, Ashadh, Sraban, Aswin, Agrahayan, 1331 B.S., Jaistha, Paush, Falgun, 1332 B.S., Baisakh, Sraban, Bhadra, Kartik 1333 B.S.; GB, General (Education), File No. 1H-33, B October 1913, Progs. Nos. 278-287, K.W., pp. 1-2; Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibanchari*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
11. *Purbabanga Vaisya Samiti Ashtam Barshiya Karayabibaran*, (Calcutta, 1917), pp. 3-4, 10-11, 34-36; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Chaturdas Barshik Karayabibaran*, (Jessore, 1915), pp. 14, 16-18, 31-38, 61-62; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Panchadas Barshik Karayabibaran*, (Jessore, 1916), pp. 25-32, 59-62, 65, 68; *Sadgop Patrika*, Sraban 1337 B.S.; Baisakh 1338 B.S.
12. Makhanlal Desmukh, *Swajati Hitasadhan Samiti, Dacca, Karayabibaran*, *Pratham Barsha*, 1330, (in Bengali), (Dacca, 1331 B.S.), pp. 2-3, 8-9, 25-28.
13. *Sadgop Sabhar Niyamabali*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 7.
14. Mahadeb Chandra Ray, *Jasohar O Nadia Sutradhar Samaj ba Samiti*, (in Bengali), (Chuadanga, 1333 B.S.), pp. 1-5.
15. *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Agrahayan, Paush, Magh 1323 B.S.; Baisakh, Jaistha, Ashadh, Sraban, Bhadra, Kartik, Agrahayan, Magh 1324 B.S.; Jaistha,

Sraban, Bhadra 1325 B.S.; Baisakh 1327 B.S.; Paush, Magh 1332 B.S.; Paush 1333 B.S.; Agrahayan, Paush, Magh 1334 B.S.; Ashadh, Sraban 1335 B.S.; *Karya-bibharani, Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani, Pratham Adhibesan, Baisakh 1323*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1323 B.S.), pp.1, 12-13, 15, 26, 29, 32, 55 71; Narendranath Laha, *Subarnabanik Katha O Kirti*, (in Bengali), Vol. II, (Calcutta, 1941), p.150.

16. *Tilir Gaurab*, Magh, Chaitra 1325 B.S.; Jaistha, Bhadra, Aswin, Kartik, Agrahayan, Paush 1326 B.S.
17. *Gandhabanik*, Magh 1329 B.S.; Jaistha, Ashadh, Bhadra, Aswin, Paush, Magh, Chaitra 1330 B.S.
18. For details, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Social Protest or Politics of Backwardness? The Namasudra Movement in Bengal, 1872-1911', in Basudeb Chattopadhyay, et.al., (ed.), *Dissent and Consensus: Social Protest in Pre-Industrial Societies*, (Calcutta, 1989), pp. 181-193.
19. H.A.F. Lindsay, Under Secy., GB, General (Education), to Commissioner, Presidency Division, 5 October 1910, GB, General (Education), File No.5 E-7, B March 1911, Progs., Nos 233-235; *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Panchadas Barshik Karyabibaran*, op. cit., p.55.
20. *Jogisakha*, Agrahayan 1312 B.S.; Baisakh, Bhadra, Aswin 1313 B.S.; Jaistha, Ashadh, Bhadra, 1331 B.S.
21. For example, even the leaders of the resourceful 'Tilijati Samilani' often noted with regret their inability to oblige all the applicants for educational scholarships. See *Tilir Gaurab*, Paush 1326 B.S.
22. GB, General (Miscellaneous), File No.12A-2, B December 1909, Progs. Nos.202-208, Abstract.
23. N.K. Bose, *The Structure of Hindu Society*, translated from Bengali by Andre Beteille, (New Delhi, 1975), p.159; *BLCP*, Vol. I, No.5, 14 March 1921, p.43; Vol. 34, No.3, 19 March 1930, p.158; Sitanath Biswas, *Jatiuttva O Namasya-Kulodaran*, (in Bengali), (Dacca, 1931), p.157.
24. GB, General (Education), File No.2P-12, B April 1919, Progs. Nos.40-46, Abstract.
25. *Mahishya Samaj*, Paush 1319 B.S.; also GB, Education (Education), File No. Edn. 2P-55, B September 1922, Progs. Nos.78-79, Abstract.
26. *Kshatriya*, Ashadh 1331 B.S.; Sraban 1332 B.S.; Sraban 1333 B.S.
27. Rai Saheb Panchanan Bama, Secretary, Kshatriya Samity, Rangpur, to Dr. W.W.

Homell, Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, 5 June 1923, GB, Education (Education), File No.2P-47, B December 1923, Progs. Nos.939-945.

28. Priya Lal Das, President, Bangiya Karmakar Sammilani, to Chief Secy., GB, 18 July 1922, GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.1D-1, November 1922, Progs. Nos.114-417.
29. GB, Appointment, File No.4D-7,B September 1929, Progs. Nos.275-276, Abstract; also, File No.6E-18 of 1932, B March 1933, Progs. Nos.228-229, Abstract; *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Magh 1332 B.S.
30. *Bengalee*, 10 November 1917.
31. *The Statesman*, 5 November 1918.
32. *Tilir Gaurab*, Chaitra 1325 B.S.
33. 'Report on Newspapers and Periodicals in Bengal' for the week ending 26 October 1912.
34. 'Minutes on the Depressed Classes by Mr. M.B. Mullick', *Report of the Bengal Franchise Committee*, (Calcutta, 1932), pp.23-24; 'Notes on the Communal Award...' by Rai Sahib P. Barma, M.L.C.; Note by Sarat Chandra Bal, M.L.C., submitted to R.N. Reid, Member, Executive Council, Bengal, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-90, B August 1933, Progs. Nos.870-886.
35. *Tilir Gaurab*, Baisakh 1327 B.S.
36. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-133 of 1932, July 1933, Progs. Nos.20-21, K.W., pp.3-4, Appendix I & II.
37. For details, see Part II of the unpublished Ph.D. Thesis of the present author, 'Social Mobility in Bengal in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries', Calcutta University, 1985.
38. *Kshatriya*, Baisakh 1327 B.S.; Baisakh, Jaistha, Ashadh, Sraban, Falgun 1331 B.S.; Jaistha, Sraban, Chaitra 1332 B.S.; Sraban, Paush-Chaitra, 1333 B.S.; Upendranath Barman, *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, (in Bengali), (Jalpaiguri, 1392 B.S.), pp.31-36; Nirmal Chandra Chaudhuri, *Swadhinata Sangrame Rajbansi Sampraday*, (in Bengali), (Jalpaiguri, 1985), p.41; Swaraj Basu, *op. cit.*, pp.61-62; Rajat K. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, (Delhi 1984), p.306; Ranajit Das Gupta, 'Peasants, Workers and Freedom Struggle, Jalpaiguri, 1945-47', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, No.30, 1985.
39. Masayuki Usuda, 'Aswini Kumar Datta's Role in Political, Social and Cultural Life of Bengal', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Calcutta University, 1977), Chapter

- IV; also see *Pur'abanga Vaisya Samiti Ashtam Barshik Karyabibarni*, *op.cit.*, p.2.
40. N. Bonham-Carter, Commissioner, Dacca Division, to H.H. Veitch, Under Secy. Government of EB & A, Political, 26 September 1911, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.181 of 1912; 'Political Situation in Bengal', GB, Home (Confidential), File Nos.67 (1-9) of 1913, 9(1-8) of 1914, 125 (1-3) of 1915.
  41. 'Fortnightly Report on the Political Situation in Bengal' for the first and second halves of February, first and second halves of March and second half of September 1924.
  42. Makhanlal Desmukh, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9 and Appendix.
  43. *Tilir Gaurab*, Chaitra 1325 B.S.; Baisakh 1326 B.S.
  44. Addl. Supdt. of Police, Rangpur, to D.I.G., Police, Intelligence Branch, C.I.D., Bengal, 12 February 1922, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.14 (21-30) of 1922.
  45. See for example, the Jaistha-Ashadh 1334 B.S. number.
  46. *Karyabibarni*, *Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani*, *Pratham Adhibesan*, *Baisakh 1323*, *op. cit.*, p.10; *Subarnabanik Samachar*, *Paush 1333 B.S.*, *Agrahayan 1334 B.S.*
  47. *Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Saptadas Barshik Karyabibaran*, (Jessore, 1919), pp.44-45; Gobindachandra Bhawal, *Hindu Jatibhed O Barui Jatir Itihas*, (in Bengali), (Dacca, 1912), pp.75-76, 91.
  48. *Gandhabanik*, *Magh 1330 B.S.*
  49. *Mahishya Samaj*, *Jaistha*, *Ashadh*, *Falgun 1318 B.S.*, *Paush 1319 B.S.*, *Bhadra*, *Magh 1321 B.S.*
  50. For details, see Hitesranjan Sanyal, 'Congress Movements in the Villages of Eastern Midnapore, 1921-131', *op. cit.*, pp.169-178.
  51. *Jogisakha*, *Bhadra 1321 B.S.*, *Ashadh 1322 B.S.*
  52. Memorial of Dagu Mali etc., members of the depressed class called Bhumi-Malis, in the Sub-division of Tangail, to Lt. Governor, EB & A, 24 April 1910, GI, Home (Political), B October 1910, Prog. No.14; 'Report on the political situation in Eastern Bengal and Assam for the month of November 1910', GI, Home (Political), December 1910, Prog. No.60.
  53. Manindranath Mandal, *Bangiya Janasangha*, (in Bengali), (Khejuri, Midnapore, 1330 B.S.), p.31.



54. *Mahishya Samaj*, Baisakh 1318 B.S.; English translation in Hitesranjan Sanyal, 'Congress Movements in the Villages of Eastern Midnapore, 1921-1931', *op. cit.*, p.173.
55. *Kshatriya*, Baisakh 1327 B.S.
56. *Mahishya Samaj*, Ashadh 1318 B.S.
57. Raicharan Biswas, *Jatiya Jagaran*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1921), p.17.
58. *Pataka*, (organ of the Sutradhar or carpenter caste), Baisakh 1318 B.S.
59. *Jogisakha*, Bhadra 1315 B.S., also see, Sashibhushan Nath, *Jogi Darpan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1332 B.S.), p.38.
60. *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Sraban 1335 B.S.
61. *Tilir Gaurab*, Sraban 1326 B.S., Bhadra 1328 B.S., Chaitra 1335 B.S.
62. Narayan Chandra Saha, *Saundik Puran*, (in Bengali), (Ichhapur, 24-Parganas, 1830 Sakabda), p.40.
63. C.F. Andrews, 'A Review of the Modern World', *The Modern Review*, November 1909.
64. Prafulla Chandra Ray, *Jatibhed O Patitya Samasya*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, n.d.), pp.17-18, 29.
65. Madhusudan Kabyavyakaranantirtha, *Nimna O Patit Jati*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1328 B.S.), pp.91-92, 137-157.
66. Dilip Kumar Biswas, (ed.), Shibnath Shastri, *Jatibhed*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1964), Editorial Notes, pp.71, 85-86, 88-89; Madhusudan Kabyavyakaranantirtha, *op.cit.*, p.31.
67. Note by S.P. Sinha, 31.8.1917, GB, General (Education), File No.11C-98, September 1917, Progs. Nos.55-56, K.W., p.2.
68. D.D.N. Maitra, Hony. Secy., Bengal Social Service League, to Registrar, General Dept. 15 July 1916; Krishna Kumar Mitra to Registrar, General Dept., 7 August 1916, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17, K.W., pp.3-4.
69. L.S.S. O'Malley, Secy., GB, General to D.P.L, Bengal, 18 October 1918, GB, General (Education), File No.1G-33, October 1918, Progs. Nos.17-24.
70. H.E. Stapleton to W.B. Finnigan, Offcg. A.D.P.L, 17 November 1922, GB, Edu-

- cation (Education), File No.11C-205, November 1922, Progs. Nos.98-99, Appendix.
71. D.P.I., Bengal, to Secy., GB, Education, 17 February 1926, GB, Education (Education), File No.1E-4, B December 1926, Progs. Nos.306-313.
  72. Krishna Kumar Mitra to Registrar, General Dept., 7 August 1916, *op. cit.*; Weekly Report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, 17 January 1911, GI, Home (Political), B February 1911, Prog. No.3
  73. Sailesnath Sarma Bisi, *Hindu Samajer Bartaman Samasya, Sirajganj Bangiya Pradeshik Hindu Sammelaner Abhyarthana Samitir Sabhapatir Abhibhashan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, n.d.), pp.4,8, 11-12.
  74. *Kshatriya*, Baisakh, Jaistha 1331 B.S.
  75. Prafulla Chandra Ray, *Faridpur Pradeshik Hindu Sabha, Sabhapatir Abhibhashan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1925), pp.3,7.
  76. *Kshatriya*, Paush-Chaitra 1333 B.S.
  77. Sailesnath Sarma Bisi, *op. cit.*, p.11.
  78. Matilal Ray, *Hindu Jagaran*, Calcutta Burrabazar Hindu Sabha, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, n.d.), p.6.
  79. O.M. Martin, Dist. Magistrate, Dacca, to Commsr., Dacca Divison, 27 September 1929, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.610 (1-5) of 1929; for more details, see Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, *Satyagrahas in Bengal, 1921-39*, (Calcutta, 1977), pp.159-164.
  80. Matilal Ray, *op. cit.*, pp.3, 6-7.
  81. For Congress connection of Hindu Sabha, see Leonard Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940*, (New Delhi, 1979), p.196; for an example of adverse reaction of a lower caste to Hindu Sabha activities, see *Jogisakha*, Falgun 1330 B.S. For an authoritative statement on the alienation of the organised Scheduled Castes of Bengal from the Hindu Mahasabha, see Jogendra-nath Mandal, *Sabhapatir Abhibhashan, Pradeshik Tapsilijati Federation, Pratham Pradeshik Mahasammelan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1945), pp.12-15. However, Mandal's presidential address also suggests that some of the Scheduled Caste leaders in this province had joined hands with the Mahasabha.
  82. Leonard Gordon, *op. cit.*, p.196.
  83. For details, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Social Protest or Politics of Backwardness? The Namasudra Movement in Bengal, 1872-1911', *op. cit.*, pp.193-220.

84. Digindra Narayan Bhattacharya, *Jatibhed*, (in Bengali), (Sirajganj, Jaistha 1319 B.S.), pp.9-10, 131-134; also see his *Chaturvarna Bibhag*, (in Bengali), (Sirajganj, Ashadh 1324, B.S.).
85. *Bengalee*, 26 June 1912.
86. *BLCP*, Vol. 46, 28 February 1914, p.161; Extract from the Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, GB, General (Education), File No.1E-8, January 1917, Progs. Nos.14-17.
87. GB, General (Education), File No.11C-9-1, April 1913, Prog. No.67; *BLCP*, Vol. 48, 13 March 1916, pp.163-164; Vol. 49, 4 September 1917, p.702.
88. S. Natarajan, *A Century of Social Reform in India*, (Bombay, 1959), p.144.
89. 'Annual Report on Indian papers for 1917', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.129 (1-6) of 1918.
90. Fortnightly Report on the Internal Political Situation for the second half of December 1920, GI, Home (Political), Deposit, February 1921, No.77.
91. Advocate General, Madras, to GI, 29 September 1921, GI, Home (Political), File No.303 (1-48) of 1921.
92. 'History of the Non-co-operation Movement in Bengal', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.395/1924, pp.10-13; Rajat K.Ray, *op. cit.*, pp.306-307.
93. Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, *Desbandhu-Smruti*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1939), pp.43,70.
94. Fortnightly Report on Political Situation in Bengal for the first half of March 1924.
95. *BLCP*, Vol. 19, 10 December 1925, p.351.
96. Report on Newspaper and Periodicals in Bengal for the weeks ending 2 January, 23 January and 30 January 1926.
97. Partha Chatterjee, *Bengal 1920-1947: The Land Question*, (Calcutta, 1984), pp.81-95.
98. Report on Newspaper and Periodicals in Bengal for the week ending 10 January 1925.
99. *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Falgun 1334 B.S.
100. *Ibid*, Agrahayan 1334 B.S.; Surendranath Chandra, *Asprisyata Barjan O Bid-*

haba Bibaha Sangeet, (in Bengali), (Mahishadal, n.d.), p.33. Some of these organisations were 'Medinipur Anunnata Mangal Samiti', 'Hariballavpur Hitasadhan Sabha', 'Gopalpur Mahamangal Samiti', 'Dwariberia Hitasadhan Mandali' and 'Sirajganj Daridra Bandhab Oushadhalaya'.

101. Manindranath Mandal, *Bange Digindranarayan*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1333 B.S.), p.17.
102. Kedamath Sil, *Swaraj Sadhanay Narasundar Samaj*, (in Bengali), (Sirajganj, 1331 B.S.), pp.1-30.
103. Manindranath Mandal, *Bange Digindranarayan*, *op.cit.*, p.19.
104. Digindra Narayan Bhattacharya, *Hindur Nabajagaran*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1338 B.S.), p.27.
105. I owe this information to Dr. Hitesranjan Sanyal.
106. Manindranath Mandal, *Bangiya Janasangha*, *op. cit.*, pp.16, 25, 32, 54.
107. Madan Mohan Bhaumik, *Muktir Pathe*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1331 B.S.), p.5.
108. Gurudas Ray, *Asprisyer Marmabedana*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, n.d.), p.5
109. *Karyabibaran*, *Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani*, *Pratham Adhibesan*, *Baisakh 1323*, *op. cit.*, p.35.
110. Purnachandra Ray, *Arya-Paundra Kshatriya Samaj*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1324 B.S.), p.5.
111. For particular examples of the use of this word, see Raicharan Biswas, *op. cit.*, p.124; Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibancharit*, *op. cit.*, p.15.
112. *Tilir Gaurab*, Sraban 1326 B.S.
113. *Sadgop Sabhar Niyamabali*, *op. cit.*, p.1.
114. *Subarnabanik Samachar*, Paush 1333 B.S.
115. See for example, the proceedings of the Saha conferences in Makhanlal Desmukh, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9, 25-28.
116. Manindranath Mandal, *Bangiya Janasangha*, *op. cit.*, pp.i-ix, 10, 26, 34-36, 51-52, 55-64.

117. GI, Reforms Office, File No.163/III/30-R; also Naresh Chandra Das, *Namasudra Sampraday O Bangladesh*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.), pp.52-53.
118. *Ibid.*
119. Fortnightly Report on Political Situation in Bengal for the second half of August 1930.
120. Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and Backward Classes in India*, (Delhi, 1984), p.31.
121. GI, Reforms Office, File No.K.W. of 35/31-R.
122. *The Hindustan Times*, 29 February 1932; GI, Reforms Office, File No.111/32-R.
123. *Leader*, (Allahabad), 11 May 1932; GI Reforms Office, File No.111/32-R.
124. *Eastern Times*, (Lahore), 12 July 1932; GI, Reforms Office, File No.111/32-R.
125. GI, Reforms Office, File No.173/32-R.
126. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Office, GB to GI, 16 September 1932, GI, Home (Political), File No.41-4/32-Poll.
127. Memorandum, 17 December 1934, regarding the Sundi Community submitted to the members of the Bengal Legislative Council belonging to the Scheduled Castes, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-29 of 1934, February 1935, Progs. Nos.1-15.
128. Amulyadhan Ray, Secretary, All Bengal Depressed Classes Federation, to Private Secy. to Governor of Bengal, 11-9-32, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-90, B August 1933, Progs.Nos.870-886; R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB to GI 16 September 1932, *op. cit.*
129. GB, Appointment, File No.4D-18 of 1932, B January 1933, Prog. No.137, Abstract.
130. 'Notes on the Communal Award given by the British Government in connection with the coming Reform so far as it regards to the Scheduled Castes or the Depressed Classes by Rai Sahib P. Barma, M.L.C.', GB, Appointment, File No.1R-90, B August 1933, Progs. Nos.870-886.
131. *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1931-32*, Government of Bengal, Revenue Dept., (Calcutta, 1933), Part I, p.XXIV.
132. *Bangabani*, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24 September 1932, cited in Jagadish Chandra Mandal, *Rabindranath, Gandhiji O Ambedkar*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1982),

pp.33-34, 40-62.

133. See, Rabindranath Tagore, 'Chautha Aswin', 'Mahatmajir Punyabrata', 'Brata Udjapan', in *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Birth Centenary Edition, Govt. of West Bengal, (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.), Vo.11, pp.454-465.
134. Telegram from Bengal to Foreign, Simla, No.50, 26 September 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos.20-28.
135. R.C. Roy, Secy., Bengal Depressed Classes Association to GI, 27 September 1932, GI, Reforms Office, File No.199/R/1932.
136. Telegram from R.C. Roy to Governor, 26 September 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos.20-28.
137. 'Statement of the Bengal Depressed Classes Federation on the Poona Settlement', 27.9.32, GI, Reforms Office, File No.199/R/1932.
138. R.C. Roy, Joint Secy., Bengal Depressed Classes Association, to Viceroy, 19 October 1932, GI, Reforms Office, File No.199/R/1932.
139. *BLCP*, Vol.41, No.2, 14 March 1933, p.99.
140. Telegram from Bombay Special, Bombay to Home Dept., New Delhi, 1 January 1933, GI, Home (Political), File No.50/15/33-Poll.
141. Telegram from Home, New Delhi to Bengal, Calcutta, 20 December 1932, GB, Home (Confidential), File 2/33.
142. Gandhi to Viceroy, 1 February 1933, GI, Home (Political), File No.50/II/33-Poll.
143. *Harijan*, 29 April 1933; GI, Home (Political), File No.44/35/33-Poll.
144. Srimat Swami Samadhi Prakash Aranya, *Jatikatha*, (in Bengali), (Faridpur 1340 B.S.), Preface.
145. 'Conference of the Commissioners. Draft of Memorandum on the General Political and Economic Situation in Bengal.' GB, Home (Confidential), File No.689/33.
146. Government of Bombay, Home Dept. (Special), to N.G. Hallet, Secy., GI, Home, 5 May 1933, GI, Home (Political), File No.44/35/33-Poll.
147. A.V. Thakkar, Servants of the Untouchable Society, to Birla, 7 November 1933, GI, Home (Political), File No.3/23/1933-Poll.

148. Secret Statement of B.N.G.3, 1 November 1933, GI, Home (Political), File No.3/23/1933-Poll.
149. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Govt. of India, (New Delhi, 1976), Vol. 63, p.42.
150. *Ibid*, Vol. 62, pp.121-122, 142-143, 147.
151. Priyanath Sankhyatirtha, *Gandhiji O Hindu Samaj*, (Sibpur, Howrah, 1933), pp.2,20.
152. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, op. cit.*, Vol. 57, Appendix I, pp.503-504.
153. *Ibid*, Vol. 62, p.292.
154. Jogendranath Mandal, *op. cit.*, p.14.
155. President, British Indian Association, to the Private Secy. to Governor of Bengal, 21/23 February 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-28, July 1933, Progs. Nos.1-5.
156. 'Notes of a Deputation received by His Excellency at Government House Calcutta, on the 24th January 1933, at 12-30 p.m. on the Subject of the position of Bengal under the Poona Pact', GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-202 of 1932, January 1933, Progs. Nos.20-28.
157. *BLCP* Vol.41, No. 2, 14 March 1933, pp.92-121.
158. *Ibid*, Vol.41, No. 3, 3 April 1933, p.248.
159. *Ibid*, Vol.41, No. 2, 13 March 1933, pp.54-55.
160. Rasiklal Biswas, Secretary, All India Depressed Classes Federation, to the Reforms Officer, Government of Bengal, 19 December 1932, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61. At Poona the other representative of the Bengal 'depressed classes' was the Namasudra leader Jojneswar Mandal. See Naresh Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p.56.
161. GB, Appointment, File No.1R-59, B August 1934, Prog. No.448; File 1R-91 of 1935, B January 1935, Prog. No.490; File No.1R-166, B September 1935, Progs Nos.100-102; Abstracts.
162. *BLCP*, Vol. 41, No.2, 20 February 1933, p.580.
163. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs.Nos.9-61, Serial Nos.2, 9-11.

164. *BLCP*, Vol. 41, No.1, 20 February 1933, p.15; Vol. 41, No.2, 25 March 1933, p.563; 27 March 1933, pp.567-573, 577-578.
165. GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-29 of 1934, February 1935, Progs. Nos.1-15, K.W., p.3; GB, Appointment, File No.8L-62, B May 1933, Prog. No.419, K.W., p.3.
166. GB, Appointment, File No.1R-2 of 1933, B July 1935, Progs. Nos.188-264, Abstract.
167. Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barma Jibancharit*, op. cit., p.63.
168. Reforms Commissioner, GB to Secy., GI, Reforms Office, 31 October 1934, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-29 of 1934, February 1935, Progs. Nos.1-15.
169. To the Governor of Bengal, The Humble Memorial of the Bangiya Vaisya Sutradhar Sabha etc., 28 January 1935, GB, Appointment, File No.1R-29 of 1934, June 1935, Progs. Nos.12-24; *Anandabazar Patrika*, 19 Baisakh 1342 B.S.
170. GB, Appointment (Appointment), File No.4D-8, July 1935, Progs. Nos.23-24, K.W., p.7.
171. Secretary, All Bengal Saundik Association to R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner, GB, 14 December 1934, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-29 of 1934, February 1935, Progs. Nos.1-15.
172. R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Officer, GB, to all Commissioners of Division and all District Officers (except Chittagong Hill Tracts), 4 April 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61, also K.W., p.10.
173. R.C. Roy, Hony. Secy., Bengal Depressed Classes Association to Reforms Officer, GB, 17 February 1933; also the Circular of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha, 20 January 1933, appended to the above letter, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61.
174. Secretary, All Bengal Depressed Classes' Federation, to Reforms Officer, GB, 18 February 1933, GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No.1R-2 of 1933, April 1934, Progs. Nos.9-61.
175. *BLCP*, Vol. 36, No.3, 19 March 1931, pp.214-221.
176. *Ibid*, Vol. 41, No.2, 28 March 1933, pp.633-634; Vol. 41, No.3, 3 April 1933, pp.192-193; Vol. 42, No.1, 11 August 1933, pp.193-196.
177. GB, Appointment, File No.4D-10, B October 1934, Progs. Nos.209-210, Abstract.



178. *Kshatriya*, Jaistha 1331 B.S.; Mahananda Haldar, *op. cit.*, pp.168-176, 413-415.
179. Rajani Kanta Das, *Bangiya Namasudra Conference*, (in Bengali), (Pirojpur, 1922), pp.9-11, 20-23.
180. *Kshatriya*, Ashadh 1331 B.S.
181. *BLCP*, Vol.I, No. 6, 1 April 1921, p.79; Vol. 3, 4 July 1921, p.72, 7 July 1921, pp.306-308, 12 July 1921, pp.495-496; Vol. 7, No.3, 27 February 1922, p.3.
182. For further details on the Namasudra movement, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Social Mobility in Bengal in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries', *op. cit.*, Part II; for the Rajbansi Movement see the writings of Upendranath Barman referred to above.
183. *BLCP*, Vol. 34, No.3, 31 March 1930, p.632; Vol. 41, No.1, 20 February 1933, p.44.
184. Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jibancharit*, *op. cit.*, pp.60-61; *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, *op. cit.*, pp.50-61, 66-67.
185. *BLCP*, Vol. 37, No.3, 27 March 1931, pp.640-641.
186. See, for example, the poem 'Langaler Dabi' circulated by Upendranath Barman on the eve of the election of 1937, cf, *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, *op. cit.*, pp.70-72.
187. Fortnightly Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the Second half of July 1936, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.127/36; To the Marquess of Zetland, Secretary of State for India, The humble memorial of the undersigned representatives of the Hindus of Bengal, including the Hindu Members of Bengal Legislative Council, GB, Home (Constitution & Elections), File No.R-3C-1, B June 1937, Progs.Nos.110-119. The Memorial had nothing against the Scheduled Castes. It demanded joint electorate, which the Scheduled Castes had already accepted for themselves. It also opposed the reservation of seats for the Muslim "majority" by depriving the "Hindu minority". As it was wholly directed against the Muslims, Mullick and Biswas probably did not find it objectionable and put in their signatures.
188. Tanika Sarkar, *Bengal 1928-1934: The Politics of Protest*, (Delhi, 1987), pp.69-75; Sunil Sen, *Peasant Movements in India: Mid-nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, (Calcutta, 1982), p.53.
189. Partha Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, pp.139-141, 166-170; Sunil Sen, *op. cit.*, pp.53-54.
190. Md. Enamul Huq Khan, 'A.K. Fazlul Huq and Muslim League in Bengal, 1906-1947', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1982),

pp.95-96.

191. Sunil Sen, *op. cit.*, pp.75,85.
192. District Magistrate, Pabna, to Commissioner, Presidency Division, 30 November 1936; District Magistrate, Dacca to R.N. Gilchrist, Reforms Commissioner and Joint Secy., GB, 30 November 1936, GB, Home (Constitution & Elections), File No.R3R-4, May 1937, Progs. Nos.126-138; A Brief Summary of Political Events in the Presidency of Bengal during the year 1937, GB, Home (Confidential), File No.473/37.
193. Telegram from Reforms, Bengal to Reforms, New Delhi, 29 January 1937; telegram from Reforms, Bengal, to the Secretary of State for India, 1 February 1937, GB, Home (Constitution & Elections), File No.R3E-27, May 1937, Progs. Nos.1-13. Amulyadhan Ray later returned through a by-election in 1939; see GB, Home (Constitution & Elections), File No.4E-2, B June 1939, Progs. Nos.145-161.
194. 'Statement showing the strength of various parties in the Bengal Legislative Assembly', GB, Home (Constitution & Elections), File No.R3E-27, May 1937, Progs. Nos.1-13.
195. 'Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the second half month of January 1937', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.10/37.
196. 'A Brief Summary of Political Events in the Presidency of Bengal during the year 1937', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.473/37; *Two years of Provincial Autonomy in Bengal*, Publicity Dept., Government of Bengal, (Calcutta, August 1939); Md. Enamul Huq Khan, *op. cit.*, Chapter V.
197. *Star of India*, 1 April 1937; GB, Home (Confidential), File No.10/37.
198. 'Report on the Political Situation in Bengal for the second half month of March, 1937', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.10/37.
199. Naresh Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p.58; Jagadish Chandra Mandal, *Mahapran Jogen-dranath*, Vol. I, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1382 B.S.), p.36.
200. Quoted in B.R. Ambedkar, *Emancipation of the Untouchables*, (Reprint, Bombay 1972), p.16. Emphasis added.
201. Naresh Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p.58.
202. Jogen-dranath Mandal, *op. cit.*, pp.9-10. Emphasis added.
203. *Ibid*, p.8; Naresh Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p.65.

204. Interview with Satyabrata Majumder (a Scheduled Caste activist of the 1940's) on 14.2.89; *Bharat Bani*, 1, 16 January 1982; Upendranath Barman, *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, *op. cit.*, p.99; Naresh Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p.62; Jogendranath Mandal, *op. cit.*, p.12; Jagadish Chandra Mandal, *Mahapran Jogendranath*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp.43, 47-51, 94-95, 98, 132.
205. Jogendranath Mandal, *op. cit.*, pp.9-10.
206. Upendranath Barman, *Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmriti*, *op. cit.*, p.75.
207. For details, see Sunil Sen, *op. cit.*, pp.76-77; Sugata Bose, *Agrarian Bengal: Economy, social structure and politics, 1919-1947*, (Cambridge, 1986), pp.256-273; Ranajit Dasgupta, 'Peasants, Workers and Freedom Struggle: Jalpaiguri, 1945-1947', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, No.30, 1985.

## Conclusion

A study of the organised caste movements in Bengal in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries inevitably suggests that caste was always an important factor in the socio-political life of this province. Bengal was no exception to the general rule, although problems of untouchability or social disability were not that acute here. Caste-consciousness was utilised for the political mobilization of a vast multitude, still largely untouched by a secular culture or a more broad-based national politics. The colonial policies in a significant way contributed to a rejuvenation of caste-sentiments which were eventually articulated in political life. But at the same time, the very forms of expression of such sentiments led to an erosion of the traditional society as well.

Caste as a social institution was not new in Bengal, neither was the phenomenon of corporate social mobility. Indeed, the caste system could exist for such a long time because of this limited flexibility that allowed positional readjustments for ambitious groups coming up from the bottom from time to time. But under colonial rule, the whole phenomenon assumed new dimensions. The political and economic changes of this period led to a disintegration of the old, hierarchical, interdependent relationships between castes. On the one hand, the intrusion of foreign rule corroded the local power base that maintained social discipline and punished the errant. On the other, a market economy delinked caste from the system of distribution of economic opportunities and rewards; for no occupation was now a monopoly of any particular caste. The result was a higher degree of social mobility. But this did not threaten the existence of caste as a social institution. For ritual rank was still an important index of social status. And this was mainly due to the limited nature of change. In spite of some vertical social mobility, it was still the men of the higher castes who, being traditionally in a privileged position, largely monopolised the fruits of the new order. A positive correlation between higher ritual rank

and material prosperity still held good, despite a relatively greater degree of inter-occupational mobility. The lower caste individuals who were coming up in social plane, by taking advantage of the new opportunities (mainly trade, agriculture and the new professions), could not, therefore, conceive of mobility in a secular context alone or as an individual achievement. On the contrary, they thought of corporate mobility in caste hierarchy, that was reminiscent of the older days.

This traditionalism was also because of the lack of adequate cultural reorientation of the masses. The new western liberal ideas remained confined to the men of the higher castes for a long time, while education itself led to a greater dissemination of knowledge about classical Indian culture. Prescriptions of caste still determined the patterns of social interaction and dominated inter-personal group-relations of the Bengali Hindus. Hence these upwardly mobile people, though conscious of their new secular status and aware of the existence of a market system, instead of demanding a levelling of the society, went for 'Sanskritization' and demanded higher ritual ranks, thus consciously endorsing the caste system. But the way they expressed their sentiments also weakened the structure of the traditional society and its behaviour pattern. The large scale appropriation of symbols of higher ritual status signified a protest against the institution of caste, for it used to make those symbols an exclusive monopoly of the higher castes alone. Above all, the very idea of organising movements for caste mobility, and that too by such a large number of castes at a time, threatened the hierarchical structure itself and challenged by implication the ideology of caste that made ritual ranking theoretically unchangeable in the upward direction. Moreover, the marks of distinction between castes were fading out, because of 'Sanskritization' and other forms of reference group behaviour. The different caste groups, both high and low, were becoming increasingly similar, so far as their social custom and ritual behaviour were concerned — a phenomenon which Risley had discovered in Bengal as early as in the 1890's. Still at the level of popular consciousness, caste identity remained important in determining social relations. But now it was important more in a secular context rather than ritual, as it had started influencing the secondary group relations or public life in Bengal. This was mainly due to colonial policies.

Post-1857 British policy towards the indigenous social institutions was one of non-intervention.<sup>1</sup> Caste-autonomy was legally recognised and caste-groups were regarded as valid social entities. But the system,

with its intricate complexities, proved an enigma to the foreign rulers. Any executive action required a thorough understanding of it, as well as a detailed knowledge of the customs and beliefs of the subject society. And then to control it more effectively, the rulers had to know the inner social divisions of the ruled, so that one group could be played off against the other. This realisation led to the sponsoring of a number of ethnographic studies and initiating the decennial census surveys. These colonial ethnographers in the late nineteenth century discovered two central contradictions in the pluralist society of Bengal : one between the Hindus and the Muslims and the other among the Hindus themselves, between the more advanced high caste *bhadralok* at the one end and the under-privileged lower castes, eventually known as the 'depressed classes' at the other. This stereotype began to influence the colonial policy when the *bhadralok* began to question the legitimacy of the Raj at the turn of the century. In order to weaken their movement the British first tried to rally the Muslims and then, with equal consistency, sought to mobilize the 'depressed classes' in support of the Raj. This they did by evolving a policy of 'protective discrimination', that sought to grant special favour in matters of education, employment and constitutional rights, first to the Muslims and, then to the 'depressed classes', later called the 'Scheduled Castes'. The Bengal Government had some initial hesitation about extending the policy towards the 'depressed classes' because the Muslims were politically more important in this province. The problem of untouchability was also less acute and the 'depressed classes', by the all-India definition, would only include the untouchables. But the Government of India insisted on a uniform policy throughout the country and the Bengal government later resolved its dilemma by defining the Scheduled Castes as those who were socially and politically backward to deserve the special protection of the government. This backwardness was to be determined only through its own subjective judgement. In this way, Bengal, along with the rest of the country, moved towards a corporate pluralist society, where ethnic or caste status of the individual was taken into consideration for distributing official patronage. The policy was partly to redress the existing social imbalances, but partly also to draw the attention of the larger section of the Hindu community away from the rising waves of the nationalist movement. Such a policy, it was expected, would further widen the existing social cleavages, which could then be taken advantage of to popularize India's colonial connection.

This conscious move towards developing a corporate pluralist society in the colonial set-up did bring forth its expected results. As caste status determined the nature of entitlement to government patronage, caste increasingly became a rallying symbol for political mobilization. A social category was thus transformed into an interest group. True, all the modern caste movements for social mobility did not merely result from a clannish desire for power and patronage, although it might have been present in the minds of a few leaders. A desire for various forms of freedom, as Kathleen Gough would put it, was in certain cases a much stronger motive.<sup>2</sup> Yearning for freedom should be called protest against the absence of it, and in many caste movements, like those of the Mahishyas, Rajbansis or Namasudras, such a spirit of protest against social and economic injustices led to the growth of an articulate community consciousness that cut across its inner class divisions. But in course of time, many of these movements assumed a political overtone, as their continued exclusion from the socio-economic privileges and their newly aroused spirit of self-respect filled them with a sense of alienation from the better privileged higher castes and their political agitations. The colonial policy of protective discrimination only contributed further to this development for its beneficiaries, particularly the elites among the 'depressed classes', felt more grateful to the Raj and in the process, more loyal to it. The colonial regime appeared in their consciousness to be their most trusted friend — nay their 'liberator'. Such a different perception of history, in which the colonial rule seemed to be more egalitarian than the traditional regimes of the Hindu or Muslim rulers, stood in sharp contrast to the practice of glorifying the pre-colonial past by the nationalists. Many of the caste associations in the early twentieth century made attempts at self-reliant development of their respective communities. But the immense problem of their backwardness and the persisting prejudices of the society stood in the way of their corporate mobility. As a result, although the more advanced castes, like the Mahishyas or the Subarnabaniks gradually began to feel attraction for nationalism, the 'depressed classes' started depending more and more on official patronage. To have a larger share of it, their leaders became deeply involved in constitutional debates and council politics, with the masses silently receding to the background. At this stage, which came in around the 1930's, we find a growing divergence between the aspirations of the elites and the grievances of the masses belonging to these 'depressed' communities. This led to a transfor-

mation of these caste movements from social protest to what may be called the politics for reservation. Now the elite leaders of the backward castes made use of the depressed condition of the majority of their caste brothers as a political capital in their bid for power and patronage in institutional politics. For that very reason, of course, they could not totally neglect the masses who, viewed from an institutional angle, formed their constituency. But the old symbiosis had definitely begun to crumble and this explains why the organisation of the Scheduled Castes could not ultimately emerge as a third force in Bengal politics.

But in the process caste became a political category and this process of politicisation had reached its high point by 1937. In the early nineteenth century Calcutta, S.N. Mukherjee had found two distinct levels of politics — traditional and modern, although quite often the *bhadralok* leaders used the traditional channels like the *dals* to mobilize for modern agitational movements.<sup>3</sup> Now the two levels had more effectively merged; to reach an even larger section of the population, the idioms of caste were now being more frequently used in the discourses of modern politics. The Rudolphs thought that although these caste associations were not unqualified assets, they made certain positive contributions by bringing about an extension of political education among the masses and by making the modern complex political processes more comprehensible in traditional terms to a population still largely politically illiterate.<sup>4</sup> However, to what extent could these caste associations actually expand the realm of modern politics in Bengal is open to question, for only a few castes like the Namasudras, Rajbansis or Mahishyas could effectively mobilize the masses. The activities of the other associations remained confined to the western educated upper rung of their respective communities. Those who had improved in wealth and power sought to bridge the gap between their secular status and ritual rank, economic power and social prestige, and above all, between the cultural notions and the new socio-economic realities. In most of these cases, the masses remained largely ignorant of what their leaders were doing for getting census recognition of higher ritual status of their castes or for entreating the government to grant more concessions that would hardly benefit them. But the exceptions mentioned above are important nonetheless. The Namasudra leaders were successful in involving the masses by using caste and religious linkages and by utilising their legitimate grievances against the higher castes, who were both their social oppressors



and economic exploiters. The success of the Rajbansi movement, at least at the initial stage, was also quite impressive and these two communities stood as the two main pillars of the 'depressed classes' politics in Bengal. But the Mahishyas were different. They were a middle peasant caste, controlled more surplus and were subjected to less social oppression. Most of their leaders, therefore, were less concerned about concessions and more responsive to nationalist politics. There were class divisions within the community, but caste served as a cementing force and led to the emergence of a common front for the Congress movement in eastern Midnapur. For the other castes, however, the inhibitions and reservations about joining the Congress movement were much greater and the process of their ultimate merger with it was much more prolonged and tortuous.

That modern politics or nationalism could not readily reach the under-privileged sections of the society was also due to the lack of proper initiative on the part of the main protagonists of such politics in Bengal. As *Amritabazar Patrika* put it in 1927, "Swaraj, independence, dominion status have no meaning for the 98 per cent of the population of India, unless expressed in terms of the everyday necessities."<sup>5</sup> And this the Congress leaders in Bengal failed to accomplish. Except for some isolated or periodic attempts, no concrete long-term socio-economic programme was ever launched for the cultivating or the working classes. The untouchability removal movement also could not catch up an adequate momentum. The Krishak Praja Party, by offering a positive programme for the tenants, did mobilize a sizeable section of the lower caste peasantry in eastern Bengal. But later on, it too opted for communal politics. The left forces in the 1940's had begun to mobilize the Scheduled Caste peasants around a class-based economic and political programme. This not only corroded the popular support base of the Scheduled Caste leaders, but in certain cases divided such communities along class lines. In a significant way, this weakened their movement, which the Congress then tried to appropriate by accommodating the power aspirations of the elites, the masses however still remaining outside the focus of its attention.

The way these caste movements had developed till the middle of the 1930's under the leadership of an upwardly mobile elite group, shows that these were based on a different ideological construction on the nature of colonial rule and on a different perspective on what should properly constitute a 'jati'. The preferences and priorities of

these movements suggest that they represented some parallel streams of consciousness, and were not certainly the distributaries of any major stream of nationalist politics in Bengal. But subsequently, the dominant streams sought to capture them, and this 'river capture' process picked up momentum in the 1940's, when the transfer of power became an imminent possibility. As some of their major demands, i.e., for institutional concessions and constitutional rights, had by now been more or less fulfilled, the leaders of these caste associations found it more convenient to come to terms with the dominant political force in the country, i.e., the Congress. On the other hand, the protesting spirit of the masses at this juncture began to be channelised into the other more class-oriented movements or mass organisations. This shifting of the flow from the tributaries into the major streams thus reduced the lesser parallel streams into 'beheaded rivers'. It is this hydrographic analogy that can perhaps explain the complexities of nationalist politics in Bengal, arising out of the multiplicity of responses to colonial rule and their subsequent intertwining during the last years of struggle against it.

## NOTES

1. All the aspects of this policy have not been dealt with in the present study, for they have already received adequate and excellent treatment in T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt : India 1857-1870*, (Princeton, 1964).
2. Kathleen Gough, 'Indian Nationalism and Ethnic Freedom', in David Bidney, (ed.), *The Concept of Freedom in Anthropology*, (The Hague, 1963), pp.174-175.
3. S.N. Mukherjee, 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta', in E.R. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, (eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, (Cambridge, 1970), pp.74-75.
4. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, 'The political role of India's Caste Associations', in C.E. Welch Jr., (ed.), *Political Modernization : A Reader in Comparative Political Change*, (California, 1967), pp. 127, 144.
5. *Amritabazar Patrika*, 12 May 1927.

## Appendix I

*Caste Journals Registered in 1911 and 1921*

Caste	Periodical, with periodicity and place of publication, and also the name of the Editor.	Annual Subscription	Circulation	
			1911	1921
1	2	3	4	5
Kayastha	Arya Kayastha Patrika; Monthly; Faridpur Town; Bejoy Gopal Sarkar.	Rs. 2/-	700	—
Vaiya (Saha?)	Bangiya Vaiya Sahid; Monthly; Khagra, Murshidabad; Prabhat Chandra Dutta Gupta.	Rs. 2/-	450	—
Brahman	Brahman Samaj; Fortnightly; Calcutta; Pandit Basanta Kumar Tarkamithi of Lohagara, Jessore.	Rs. 2/-	—	1000
Jogi	Jogisakha; Monthly; Calcutta; Adhar Chandra Nath; in 1921, Ambika Charan Nath.	Rs. 1-2 annas Rs. 1/-	1000	1000
Karmakar	Karmakar Bandhu; Monthly; Calcutta; Banamali Seth of Kidderpore.	Rs. 1/-	500	—
Karmakar	Karmakar Hitaishi; Monthly; Calcutta; Bholanath Karmakar, Pleader, Alipore Court.	Rs. 1-8 annas	—	500
Kayastha	Kayastha Patrika; Monthly; Calcutta;	Rs. 3/- Rs. 2/-	750	800

Madhusudan Ray; in 1921  
Upendra Nath Shastri.

Kayastha	Kayastha Samaj; Monthly; Calcutta; Upendra Chandra Mitra Shastri.	Rs. 2-8 annas	—	500
Rajbansi	Kshatriya; Monthly; Rangpur; Jogendra Nath Ray of Cooch Behar.	Rs. 2/-	—	500
Mahishya	Mahishya Mahila; Monthly; Calcutta; Krishnabhamini Biswas.	Paise 2 per copy	1000	—
Mahishya	Mahishya Samaj; Monthly; Calcutta; Narendranath Das; in 1921, Sibananda Bharati.	Rs. 1/-	500	1000
Mahishya	Mahishya Suhrid; Monthly; Calcutta; Nriya Gopal Chakraborti.	Rs. 2/-	1000	—
Moirā	Modak Samhita; Quarterly; Calcutta; Monilal Dhaki.	Rs. 1-2 anna	—	500
Namasudra	Namasudra Hitaishi; Monthly; Dacca; Bharat Chandra Sarkar.	Rs. 2/-	—	1000
Namasudra	Namasudra Sakha; Monthly; Dacca; Rajani Kanta Das.	Rs. 1/-	—	1000
Namasudra	Namasudra Suhrid;	Rs. 1/-	600	—

	Monthly; Orakandi, Faridpur; Rev. Gopal Chandra Dutt of Joynagar and Aditya Kumar Chaudhuri.			
Namasudra	Pataka; Monthly; Calcutta; Mukunda Behari Mullick.	Rs. 1/-	—	500
Sutradhar	Pataka; Monthly; Calcutta; Nityananda Ram and Haricharan Das.	Rs. 1-8 annas	500	—
Subarnabanik	Subarnabanik; Monthly; Calcutta; Kiran Gopal Sinha.	Rs. 1-8 annas	1000	—
Subarnabanik	Subarnabanik Samachar; Monthly; Calcutta; Nrisimhapada Datta, Pleader, Calcutta Small Cause Court.	Rs. 2-4 annas	—	1200
Tambuli	Tambuli Patrika; Monthly; Howrah; Rajendranath Som; and Yogendranath Sinha, Pleader in Howrah.	Rs. 1-3 annas.	—	700
Tambuli	Tambuli Samaj; Monthly; Calcutta; Rajkrishna Pal and Yogendra- nath Sinha; later, Suresh Chandra Pal.	Rs. 1/-	300	325
Teli	Teli Bandhab; Monthly; Howrah; Beharidas Pal, school teacher.	Rs. 1/-	1800	1000

Tili	Tili Bandhab; Monthly; Howrah; Beharidas Pal.	Rs. 1/-	837	—
Tili	Tilir Gourab; Monthly; Calcutta; Sashibhushan Kundu.	Rs. 1/-	—	1000
Teli	Teli Samachar; Monthly; Calcutta; Hriday Krishna Kundu, Pleader, Calcutta Small Cause Court.	Rs. 1-4 annas.	—	1000
Barui	Vaisya Barujibi Patrika; Monthly; Jessore; Prasanna Gopal Ray.	Rs. 1/-	850	—
Barui	Vaisya Patrika; Monthly; Jessore; No fixed editor.	Rs. 1/-	—	800

*Source :* 'Annual Report on Indian Papers in the Bengal Presidency for 1911', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.96 (1-5) of 1912; 'Annual Report on Indian Papers in the Bengal Presidency for 1921', GB, Home (Confidential), File No.195 (1-8) of 1922.

## Appendix II

*Castes classified as Scheduled Castes of Bengal in the Government of India (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1935 (30 April 1936)*

Agariya	Dosadh	Kaur	Munda
Bagdi	Garó	Khaira	Musahar
Bahelia	Ghasi	Khatik	Nagesia
Baiti	Gonrhi	Koch	Namasudra
Bauri	Hadi	Konai	Nat
Bediya	Hajang	Konwar	Nuniya
Beldar	Halalkar	Kora	Orao
Berua	Hari	Kotal	Paliya
Bhatiya	Ho	Lalbegi	Pan
Bhuimali	Jalia Kaibartia	Lodha	Pasi
Bhuiya	Jhalo Malo or Malo	Lohar	Patni
Bhumij	Kadar	Mahar	Pod
Bind	Kan	Mahli	Rabha
Binjhia	Kandh	Mal	Rajbansi
Chamar	Kandra	Mallah	Rajwar
Dhenuar	Kaora	Malpahariya	Santal
Dhoba	Kapuria	Mech	Sundi
Doai	Karenga	Mehtar	Tiyar
Dom	Kastha	Muchi	Turi

*Source :* GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. IR-361 of 1935, June 1936, Progs. Nos. 32-42.

### Appendix III

#### *Distribution of Scheduled Caste Population and Allocation of Reserved Seats in 1934*

<i>District</i>	<i>Scheduled Caste population</i>	<i>Percentage to total non-Muslim population of the district</i>	<i>Percentage to total Scheduled Caste population of the province</i>	<i>Allocation of reserved seats</i>
Burdwan	570,746	47.7	6.5	2
Birbhum	332,309	48.4	3.8	1
Bankura	412,092	41.2	4.7	1
Midnapur	592,453	23.5	6.8	2
Hooghly	304,891	39.8	3.5	1
Howrah	202,182	30.4	2.3	1
24-Parganas	703,722	51.0	8.1	2
Nadia	173,207	35.0	2.0	1
Murshidabad	195,441	35.5	2.2	1
Jessore	326,321	52.4	3.7	1
Khulna	527,801	66.3	6.0	2
Rajshahi	135,728	41.8	1.6	—
Malda	181,184	39.0	2.1	1
Dinajpur	550,966	64.4	6.3	2
Jalpaiguri	510,736	69.6	5.8	1
Siliguri	45,827	62.4	0.5	1
Rangpur	535,219	72.5	6.1	2
Bogra	78,482	46.4	0.9	1
Pabna	134,704	43.6	1.5	1
Dacca	449,735	43.8	5.1	2
Mymensingh	503,352	45.0	5.8	2
Faridpur	490,946	60.1	5.6	2
Bakarganj	408,695	52.2	4.7	1
Tippera	224,718	31.6	2.6	1
Noakhali	82,902	22.9	0.9	—
Chittagong	59,125	13.4	0.7	—

*Source :* GB, Appointment (Reforms), File No. IR-30, April 1934, Progs. Nos. 103-111.



## Appendix IV

*Scheduled Caste Candidates Elected to Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1937*

<i>Name of the Candidate</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Political Affiliation</i>
Adwaita Kumar Majhi	Burdwan	Hindu Sabha
Banku Behari Mandal	Burdwan	Independent
Debendranath Das	Birbhum	Independent
Ashutosh Mullick	Bankura	Congress
Krishna Prasad Mandal	Midnapur	Independent
Harendranath Dolui	Midnapur	Congress
Iswar Chandra Mal	Midnapur	Congress
Radhanath Das	Hooghly	Congress
Pulin Behari Mullick	Howrah	Independent
Hemchandra Naskar	24-Parganas	Independent
Anukulchandra Das	24-Parganas	Congress
Lakshmi Narayan Biswas	Nadia	Independent
Kirit Bhushan Das	Murshidabad	Hindu Sabha
Rasiklal Biswas	Jessore	Congress
Mukunda Behari Mullick	Khulna	Independent
Patiram Ray	Khulna	Congress
Tarini Charan Pramanik	Malda	Independent
Prem Hari Barman	Dinaipur	Independent
Shyama Prasad Barman	Dinaipur	Independent
Prasanna Deb Raikat	Jalpaiguri-cum-Siliguri	Independent
Upendranath Barman	Jalpaiguri-cum-Siliguri	Independent
Puspajit Barman	Rangpur	Independent
Kshetranath Singha	Rangpur	Independent
Madhusudan Sarkar	Bogra-cum-Pabna	Independent
Dhananjay Ray	Dacca	Independent
Amritlal Mandal	Mymensingh	Independent
Manmohan Das	Mymensingh	Independent
Pramatha Ranjan Thakur	Faridpur	Independent
Birat Chandra Mandal	Faridpur	Independent
Upendranath Edbar	Bakarganj	Independent
Jogendra Nath Mandal	Bakarganj	Independent
Jagat Chandra Mandal	Tippura	Independent

*Source : GB, Home (Constitution and Elections), File No.R.3E-27, May 1937, Progs. Nos.1-13; File No. R.3E-32, June 1937, Progs. Nos. 2-25.*



# Bibliography

## A. Primary Sources

### I. ARCHIVAL RECORDS :

#### a) West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta :

Proceedings of the Government of Bengal, in

Appointment Department;  
Appointment Department, Appointment Branch;  
Appointment Department, Reforms Branch;  
Education Department, Education Branch;  
Financial Department, Miscellaneous Branch;  
General Department;  
General Department, Education Branch;  
General Department, Miscellaneous Branch;  
Home Department, Constitution and Elections Branch;  
Judicial Department;  
Municipal Department, Local Self-Government Branch;  
Political Department, Political Branch.

Home (Confidential) Files of the Government of Bengal.

Fortnightly Reports on the Political Situation in Bengal.

Reports on Newspapers and Periodicals in Bengal.

Selections from Vernacular Newspapers in Eastern Bengal and Assam.

#### b) National Archives of India, New Delhi:

Proceedings of the Government of India, in Home Department, Political Branch.

Records of the Reforms Office, Government of India.

Risley Collection (in microfilm).

### II. PRINTED GOVERNMENT REPORTS :

*Bengal District Gazetteers, Jessore*, By L.S.S.O'Malley, (Calcutta, 1912).

*Census of India*, 1881, Vols. I & II.

*Census of India*, 1891, Vol. III, The Report.

*Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Part I; Vol. VIA, Part II.

*Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Parts I & II.

*Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Part I.

- Census of India, 1931, Vol. V, Parts I & II.*  
*Reports on the Census of the Districts of Faridpur & Khulna, 1891.*  
*Report on Labour in Bengal, by B. Foley, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, (Calcutta, 1906).*  
*Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, (Delhi, 1919).*  
*Report, Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919, (Calcutta, 1919).*  
*Report, Indian Statutory Commission, Vols. I & II, (Calcutta, 1930).*  
*Report, Bengal Franchise Committee, (Calcutta, 1932).*  
*Two Years of Provincial Autonomy in Bengal, Government of Bengal, Publicity Department, (Calcutta, 1939).*  
*Bengal Ministry and the Hindus of Bengal, Government of Bengal, Publicity Department, (Calcutta, 1940).*  
*Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings.*  
*Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings.*

### III. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS :

*Amritabazar Patrika*  
*Anandabazar Patrika*  
*Bengalee*  
*Bharat Bani*  
*Calcutta Review*  
*Kalpadrūm*  
*Modern Review*  
*The Statesman*

### IV. CASTE LITERATURE IN BENGALI :

#### a) Periodicals and Proceedings :

*Bangiya Tili Samaj Patrika*  
*Bangiya Vaisya Barujibi Sabhar Chaturdas/Panchadas/Saptadas/Ashtadas Barshik Karyabibaran, (Jessore, 1915-1919).*  
*Eighth Annual Report of the Kshatriya Samiti, Published by the Kshatriya Samiti, (Rangpur, 1325 B.S.).*  
*Gandhabanik.*  
*Jogiskha.*  
*Karyabibaran, Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani, Pratham Adhibesan, Baisakh 1323, (Calcutta, 1323 B.S.).*  
*Kshatriya.*  
*Mahishya Samaj.*  
*Modak Hitaishini.*  
*Palaka.*  
*Purbabanga Vaisya Samiti's Ashtambarshiya Karyabibaran, (Calcutta, 1917).*  
*Sadgop Patrika.*  
*Sadgop Sabhar Niyamabali, (Chandernagore, 1327 B.S.).*  
*Subarnabanik Samachar.*

*Tili Bandhab.*

*Tilir Gaurab.*

b) Tracts and Treatises:

- Adhikari, Harakishore, *Rajbansi Kulopradip*, (Calcutta, 1314 B.S.).
- Badoi Biswas, Sasikumar, *Namasudra Dwijatatva*, (Barisal, 1911).
- Barman, Upendranath, *Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihas*, Vol. I, (Jalpaiguri, 1941);  
*Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jibanchari*, (Jalpaiguri, 1387 B.S.);  
*Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jibansmruti*, (Jalpaiguri, 1392 B.S.).
- Basu, Girishchandra, *Kayastha Samajer Sanskar*, (Dacca, 1321 B.S.);  
*Vyavasthapatramala*, (Calcutta, 1355 B.S.).
- Bhawal, Gobindachandra, *Hindu Jatibhed O Baruijatir Itihas*, (Dacca, 1912).
- Biswas, Buddheswar, *Kuloddeepan Namah-Chandrika*, (Barisal, 1328 B.S.).
- Biswas, Raicharan, *Jatiya Jagaran*, (Calcutta, 1921).
- Biswas, Saratchandra, *Sadgop Jati*, Third Part, (Chandernagore, 1328 B.S.).
- Biswas, Sitanath, *Jatitattva O Namasya Kulodharpan*, (Dacca, 1931).
- Chaudhuri, Nirmal Chandra, *Swadhinata Sangrame Rajbansi Sampraday*, (Jalpaiguri, 1985).
- Das, Abinaschandra, *Gandhabanik Jatir Prachin O Bartaman Abastha*, (Calcutta, 1330 B.S.).
- Das, Naresh Chandra, *Namasudra Sampraday O Bangladesh*, (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.).
- Das, Rajani Kanta, *Bangiya Namasudra Conference*, Bengal Namasudra Conference Committee, (Pirozpur, 1922).
- Desmukh, Makhanlal, *Swajati Hitasadhan Samiti, Dacca, Karyabibaran, Pratham Barsha, 1330*, (Dacca, 1331 B.S.).
- Ghosh, Nabinchandra, *Jadubansa*, (Kishoreganj, 1923);  
*Gopjatir Kshatriyatva*, (Mymensingh, 1331 B.S.).
- Halder, Mahananda, *Sri Sri Guruchand Charit*, (Calcutta, 1943).
- Kundu, Sasibhushan, *Tilijatir Vaisyatva Praman*, (Calcutta, 1330 B.S.).
- Laha, Narendranath, *Subarnabanik Katha O Kirti*, Vols. I & II, (Calcutta, 1940-41).
- Mandal, Jogendranath, *Sabhapatir Abhibhashan, Pradeshik Tapsili Jati Federation, Pratham Pradeshik Mahasammelan, Gopalganj, 24th & 25th April 1945*, (Calcutta, n.d.).
- Mandal, Manindranath, *Arya Paundrak*, (Calcutta, 1317 B.S.);  
*Bangiya Janasangha*, (Khejuri, Midnapur, 1330 B.S.);  
*Bange Digindranarayan*, (Calcutta, 1333 B.S.).
- Mazumder, Gurucharan, *Kayastha Kaustuv*, (Calcutta, 1282 B.S.).
- Mullick, Rashbehari, *Vaisya Itihas*, Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1369 B.S.).
- Nandi Barma, Sasibhushan, *Kayastha Puran*, Second Edition, edited by Girishchandra Vidyalankar, (Calcutta, 1335 B.S.).
- Nath, Sasibhushan, *Jogi Darpan*, (Calcutta, 1332 B.S.).
- Nath Bhattacharya, Bangachandra, *Nathbandhu Harimohan*, (Calcutta, 1362 B.S.).
- Nath Mazumder, Sureschandra, *Rajguru Jogibansa ba Rudraja Brahmanjatir Bibaran*, (Kachhar, 1334 B.S.).
- Ray, Chandreswar, *Uttaranga Rajbansi Samajniti*, (1333 B.S.).
- Ray, Mahadeb Chandra, *Jasohar O Nadia Sutradhar Samaj ba Samiti*, (Chuadanga, 1333 B.S.).

- Ray, Purnachandra, *Arya-Paundra Kshatriya Samaj*, (Calcutta, 1324 B.S.).  
 Ray, Rashbehari, *Namasudra Darpan*, Vol. I, (Khulna, 1910).  
 Saha, Narayan Chandra, *Saundik Puran*, (Ichhapur, 24-Parganas, 1830 Sakabda).  
 Sarkar, Prakash Chandra, collected and edited, *Gobardhanakrita Brihat Mahishya-Karika*, (Calcutta, 1931).  
 Sen, Shyamlal, *Ambashtha Tattvakaumudi*, (Calcutta, 1323 B.S.).  
 Sen Sharma, Shyamacharan, *Bangiya Baidyajati*, (Chittagong, 1330 B.S.).  
 Sil, Kedarnath, *Swaraj Sadhanay Narasunder Samaj*, (Sirajganj, 1331 B.S.).  
 Sil, Sibchandra, *Gaude Subarnabanik*, (Chinsurah, 1317 B.S.).  
 Smrititirtha, Sitikantha, *Ugrakshatriya Samhita*, (Calcutta, 1300 B.S.).  
 Talukdar, Harekrishna, *Vaisya Saha Jatir Itibritto*, (Calcutta, 1911).

## B. Secondary Sources

### I. PRINTED BOOKS AND ARTICLES :

#### a) Books in Bengali :

- Aranya, Srimat Swami Samadhi Prakash (Nareschandra Chattopadhyay), *Jatikatha*, (Faridpur, 1340 B.S.).  
 Bhadra, Gautam, *Mughal Juge Krishi Arthaniti O Krishak Bidroha*, (Calcutta, 1983).  
 Bharatchandra, *Annadamangal*, in Brojendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajani Kanta Das, (eds.), *Bharatchandra Granthabali*, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, (Third Edition, Calcutta, 1369 B.S.).  
 Bhattacharya, Digindra Narayan, *Jatibhed*, (Sirajganj, 1319 B.S.);  
*Chaturvarna Bibhag*, (Sirajganj, 1324 B.S.);  
*Hindur Nabajagaran*, (Calcutta 1338 B.S.).  
 Bhattacharya, Narendranath, *Bharatiya Jativarnapratha*, (Calcutta, 1987).  
 Bhaumik, Madan Mohan, *Muktir Pathe*, (Calcutta, 1331 B.S.).  
 Chakraborti, Bani, *Samaj-Sanskarak Raghunandan*, (Second Edition, Calcutta, 1970).  
 Chakraborti, Sudhir, *Sahebhdhani Sampraday O Tader Gaan*, (Calcutta 1985);  
*Balahadi Sampraday ar Tader Gaan*, (Calcutta, 1986).  
 Chandra, Surendranath, *Asprisya Barjan O Bidhaba Bibaha Sangeet*, (Mahishadal, n.d.).  
 Ghosh, Benoy, *Samayik Patre Banglar Samajchitra*, Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1978).  
 Gupta, Vijay, *Manasamangal*, edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, (Calcutta, n.d.).  
 Halder, Paramananda, *Matua Dharma Darshan*, (Thakumagar, 24-Parganas, 1393 B.S.).  
 Jasimuddin, *Murshida Gaan*, (Dacca, 1977).  
 Kabyavyakarantirtha, Mudhusudan, *Nimna O Patit Jati*, (Calcutta, 1328 B.S.).  
 Mandal, Jagadish Chandra, *Mahapran Jogendranath*, (Calcutta, 1382 B.S.);  
*Rabindranath, Gandhiji O Ambedkar*, (Calcutta, 1982).  
 Mandal, Panchanan, *Chuhipatre Samajchitra*, Vol. I, Part I, (Santiniketan, 1968).  
 Mazumder, Lalbehari, *Asabarna Bibaha Samarthan Pakshe*, (Malda, 1326 B.S.).  
 Mitra, Sudhir Kumar, *Hooghly Zelar Itihas O Bangasamaj*, (Calcutta, 1962).  
 Mukhopadhyay, Amitabha, *Jatibhedpratha O Unish Sataker Bangali Samaj*, (Calcutta 1981).  
 Mukundaram, *Chandimangal*, edited by Sukumar Sen, Sahitya Academy, (New Delhi, 1975).  
 Surendra Chandra, *Bandar Kasimbazar*, (Calcutta, 1978).

- Ray, Gurudas, *Asprisyer Marmabedana*, (Calcutta, n.d.).
- Ray, Matilal, *Hindur Jagaran*, Calcutta Burrabazar Hindu Sabha, (Calcutta, n.d.).
- Ray, Niharrajan, *Bangali Hindur Varnabhed*, (Calcutta, 1352 B.S.);  
*Bangalir Itihas, Adi Parba*, (Third Edition, Calcutta, 1980).
- Ray, Prafulla Chandra, *Jatibhed O Patitya Samasya*, (Calcutta, n.d.);  
*Sabhapatir Abhibhashan, Faridpur Pradeshik Hindu Sabha*, (Calcutta, 1925).
- Sankhyatirtha, Priyanath, *Gandhiji O Hindu Samaj*, (Sibpur, Howrah, 1933).
- Sarkar, Hemanta Kumar, *Desbandhu-Smriti*, (Calcutta, 1939).
- Sarma Bisi, Sailesnath, *Hindu Samajer Bartaman Samasya, Sirajganj Bangiya Pradeshik Hindu Sammelaner Abhyarthana Samitiir Sabhapatir Abhibhashan*, (Calcutta, n.d.).
- Shastri, Sibnath, *Jatibhed*, edited by Dilip Kumar Biswas, (Calcutta, 1963).
- Shastri, Haraprasad, *Brihaddharmapuramam*, Bibliotheca Indica, Asiatic Society of Bengal Edition, (Calcutta, 1888).
- Tagore, Rabindranath, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Birth Centenary Edition, Government of West Bengal, (Calcutta, 1368 B.S.).
- Tarkaratna, Panchanan, translated and edited, *Brahmavaivartta Puran*, revised by Srijib Nyayatirtha, (Calcutta, 1391 B.S.).
- Tarkaratna, Ramnarayan, *Kulinkulosarbasya*, (Bangabasi Second Edition, Calcutta, 1854).

b) Books and Articles in English:

- Ahmed, Rafiuddin, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906 : A Quest for Identity*, (Delhi, 1981).
- Ambedkar, B.R., *Emancipation of the Untouchables*, (Reprint, Bombay, 1972).
- Arnold, David, Robin Jeffrey and James Manor, 'Caste Associations in South India: A Comparative Analysis,' *The Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, July-September 1976.
- Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar, 'Caste and Society in Colonial Bengal : Change and Continuity', *The Journal of Social Studies*, (Dhaka), No. 28, April 1985;
- 'The Raj, Risley and the Tribes and Castes of Bengal', *India Past and Present*, Vol. II, No.1, 1985;
- 'Social Protest or Politics of Backwardness ? — The Namasudra Movement in Bengal, 1872-1911' in Basudeb Chattopadhyay, H.S.Vasudevan and Rajat K. Ray, (eds.), *Dissent and Consensus : Social Protest in Pre-Industrial Societies*, (Calcutta, 1989).
- Barrier, N. Gerald, (ed.), *The Census in British India : New Perspectives*, (New Delhi, 1981).
- Barber, Bernard, 'Social Mobility in Hindu India', in James Silverberg, (ed.), *Social Mobility in Caste System in India*, (The Hague, 1968).
- Basu, Prafullachandra, *The Middle Class People in Calcutta*, (Calcutta, 1925).
- Beteille, Andre, *Caste, Class and Power*, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971).
- Beveridge, H., *The District of Bakarganj : Its History and Statistics*, (London, 1876).
- Bhattacharya, Buddhadeb, *Satyagrahas in Bengal, 1921-1939*, (Calcutta, 1977).
- Bhattacharya, Swapna, *Landeschenkungen und Staliche Entwicklung in Frauehmittelalterlichen Bengalen 5. bis 13. Jh. n. chr.*, (in German), (Wiesbaden, 1985).

- Bhattacharya, J.N., *Hindu Castes and Sects*, (Second Edition, Calcutta, 1968).
- Bose, Nirmal Kumar, 'Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal' in Milton Singer, (ed.), *Traditional India : Structure and Change*, (Philadelphia, 1959);  
*The Structure of Hindu Society*, translated from Bengali by Andre Beteille, (New Delhi, 1975).
- Bose, Sugata, *Agrarian Bengal : Economy, Social Structure and Politics, 1919-1947*, (Cambridge, 1986).
- Broomfield, J.H., *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth Century Bengal*, (California, 1968).
- Brown, Judith M., *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, (Cambridge, 1972).
- Carroll, Lucy, 'Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 2, February 1978.
- Chakraborti, Ramakanta, *Vaisnavism in Bengal, 1486-1900*, (Calcutta, 1985).
- Chatterjee, Partha, 'Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal, 1926-1935', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I : Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Delhi, 1982);  
*Bengal 1920-1947 : The Land Question*, (Calcutta, 1984);  
 'Caste and Subaltern Consciousness', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies VI : Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Delhi, 1989).
- Cohn, Bernard S., 'The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste', in Mckim Marriot, (ed.), *Village India*, (Chicago, 1955);  
 'Notes on the Study of Indian Society and Culture', in Milton Singer and B.S.Cohn, (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, (Chicago, 1968);  
 'History and Anthropology : The State of Play' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 1980;  
 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia', *Folk*, No. 26, 1984;  
 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV : Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Delhi, 1986).
- Conlon, Frank F., 'The Census of India as a Source for the Historical Study of Religion and Caste', in N. Gerald Barrier, (ed.), *The Census in British India : New Perspectives*, (New Delhi, 1981).
- Cronin, Richard P., *British Policy in Bengal, 1905-1912 : Partition and the New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, (Calcutta, 1977).
- Damle, Y.B., 'Reference Group Theory with regard to Mobility in Caste', in James Silverberg, (ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, (The Hague, 1968).
- Das Gupta, Ranajit, 'Peasants, Workers and Freedom Struggle, Jalpaiguri, 1945-47', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, No. 30, 1985.
- Derrett, J.D.M., *Hindu Law — Past and Present*, (Calcutta, 1957).
- Dumont, Louis, *Homo Hierarchicus*, (London, 1972).
- Dutt, N.K., *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. II, (Calcutta, 1969).
- Dutt, R.P., *India To-Day*, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1979).
- Gait, E.A., 'Caste', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. III, Second Edition, 1932.
- Galanter, Marc, 'Law and Caste in Modern India', *Asian Survey*, Vol. III, No.2, November 1963;



- Changing Legal Conceptions of Caste', in Milton Singer and B.S. Cohn, (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, (Chicago, 1968);
- Competing Equalities : Law and Backward Classes in India*, (Delhi, 1984).
- Gallagher, John, 'Congress in Decline : Bengal, 1930 to 1939', in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal, (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation : Essays on Indian Politics*, (Cambridge, 1973).
- Gandhi, M.K., *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, The Publications Division, Government of India, (New Delhi, 1969-76).
- Ghurye, G.S., *Caste and Class in India*, (Bombay, 1957).
- Gopal, S., *British Policy in India*, (Cambridge, 1965).
- Gordon, Leonard, *Bengal : The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940*, (New Delhi, 1979).
- Gordon, Milton M., 'Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations', in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, (eds.), *Ethnicity : Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge MA : Harvard University Press, 1975);
- 'Models of Pluralism : The New American Dilemma', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 454, March 1981.
- Gough, Kathleen, 'Indian Nationalism and Ethnic Freedom', in David Bidney, (ed.), *The Concept of Freedom in Anthropology*, (The Hague, 1963);
- 'Indian Peasant Uprising', in A.R. Desai, (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India*, (Paperback Edition, Delhi, 1981).
- Gupta, Krishna Prakash, 'Religious evolution and social change in India: a study of the Ramakrishna Mission Movement', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, No. 8, 1974.
- Habib, Irfan, 'The Social Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India', *Enquiry*, New Series, Vol. II, No. 3, Winter, 1956;
- The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, (Bombay, 1963).
- Hardgrave, Robert, *The Nadars of Tamilnad*, (Berkeley, 1969).
- Heimsath, Charles H., *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, (Princeton, 1964).
- Hunter, W.W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vols. I-VI, (Reprint, Delhi, 1973).
- Hutton, J.H., *Caste in India*, (Fourth Edition, Delhi, 1973).
- Inden, Ronald, 'The Hindu Chieftdom in Middle Bengali Literature', in Edward C. Dimock, Jr., (ed.), *Bengal : Literature and History*, (East Lansing, Michigan, 1967);
- Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture*, (New Delhi, 1976).
- Irschik, Eugene, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India : The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).
- Jeffrey, Robin, 'The Social Origins of a Caste Association : The Founding of the SNDP Yogam', *South Asia*, Vol. IV, October 1974.
- Joshi, V.C., (ed.), *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India*, (Delhi, 1975).
- Karve, Irawati, *Hindu Society — An Interpretation*, (Third Edition, Poona, 1977).
- Kopf, David, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, (Princeton, 1979).
- Leach, E.R., (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, North West Pakistan*, (Cambridge, 1960).
- Leonard, Karen I., *Social History of an Indian Caste : The Kayasthas of Hyderabad*,

- (Delhi, 1978).
- Lynch, Owen, *The Politics of Untouchability : Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India*, (New York and London, 1969).
- Madelbaum, David G., *Society in India*, (Indian Edition, Bombay, 1972).
- Marriot, Mckim, 'Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking', *Man in India*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2, 1959.
- Martin, Montgomery R., *History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, (London, 1938).
- Mead, C.S., *The Namasudras and Other Addresses*, (Adelaide, 1911).
- Metcalf, T.R., *The Aftermath of Revolt : India, 1857-1870*, (Princeton, 1964).
- Misra, B.B., *The Indian Middle Classes and their Growth in Modern Times*, (Delhi, 1978).
- Moore, Jr., Barrington, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, (Preregrine Book, 1977).
- Mukherjee, Ramkrishna, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, (Berlin, 1957).
- Mukherjee, S.N., 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta', in E.R. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, (eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, (Cambridge, 1970).
- Natarajan, S., *A Century of Social Reform in India*, (Bombay, 1959).
- O'Hanlon, Rosalind, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology : Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India*, (Cambridge, 1985).
- O'Malley, L.S.S., *Indian Caste Customs*, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1976); *India's Social Heritage*, (Reprint, New Delhi, 1976).
- Omvedt, Gail, *Cultural Revolt in Colonial Society : The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873-1930*, (Bombay, 1976).
- Patankar, Bharat and Gail Omvedt, 'The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, 1979.
- Potts, Daniel, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837*, (Cambridge, 1967).
- Ray, Aniruddha, 'Revolt of Shova Singh — a case study', *Bengal Past and Present*, July 1969 and January 1970.
- Ray, Rajat K., 'Introduction', in V.C. Joshi, (ed.), *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India*, (Delhi, 1975); *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, (Delhi, 1984); 'The Peasant and the Landless Untouchable in the Fiction of the Gandhian Age', in Sudhir Chandra (ed.), *Social Transformation and Creative Imagination*, (New Delhi, 1984).
- Ray, Ratnalckha, *Change in Bengal Agrarian Society, 1760-1850*, (New Delhi, 1979).
- Raychaudhuri, Tapan, *Europe Reconsidered : Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, (Delhi, 1988).
- Risley, H.H., *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vols. I & II, (Reprint, Calcutta, 1981).
- Roselli, John, 'Sri Ramakrishna and the educated elite of late nineteenth century Bengal', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, New Series, Vol.12, No.2, 1978.
- Rowe, William L., 'The New Cauhans; A Caste Mobility Movement in North India', in James Silverberg, (ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, (The Hague, 1968).
- Roy, Benoy Bhusan, *Socio-economic Impact of Sati in Bengal and the Role of Raja Rammohun Roy*, (Calcutta, 1987).
- Rudolph, Lloyd I. and Susanne H., *The Modernity of Tradition*, (Chicago, 1967);

- 'The Political Role of India's Caste Associations', in C.E. Welch, Jr., (ed.), *Political Modernisation : A Reader in Comparative Political Change*, (California, 1967).
- Sanyal, Hitesranjan, 'Temple Building in Bengal from 15th to the 19th centuries', in B.De, (ed.), *Perspectives in Social Sciences, I, Historical Dimension*, (Delhi, 1977);
- 'Congress Movements in The Villages of Eastern Midnapore, 1921-1931', in Marc Gaborieau and Alice Thomer, (eds.), *Asie Du Sud. Traditions Et Changements*, (Paris, 1979);
- Social Mobility in Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1981);
- 'Trends of Change in the Bhakti Movement in Bengal', Occasional Paper No. 76, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1985.
- Sarkar, Sumit, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-8*, (New Delhi, 1973);
- 'Condition and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Co-operation, 1905-1922', in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III : Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Delhi, 1984).
- Sarkar, Tanika, *Bengal 1928-1934 : The Politics of Protest*, (Delhi, 1987).
- Sarma, Jyotirmoyee, *Caste Dynamics among the Bengali Hindus*, (Calcutta, 1980).
- Seal, Anil, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1968).
- Sen, Asok, *Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestones*, (Calcutta, 1977).
- Sen, Sunil, *Peasant Movements in India: Mid-nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, (Calcutta, 1982).
- Silverberg, James, (ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, (The Hague, 1968).
- Singer, Milton and B.S. Cohn, (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, (Chicago, 1968).
- Sinha, N.K., *The Economic History of Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1965).
- Sinha, Pradip, *Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History*, (Calcutta, 1965).
- Srinivas, M.N., 'Mobility in the Caste System', in Milton Singer and B.S.Cohn, (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, (Chicago, 1968);
- Social Change in Modern India*, (Indian Edition, Orient Longman, 1977).
- Tripathi, Amale, *The Extremist Challenge*, (Calcutta, 1967);
- Vidyasagar, The Traditional Moderniser*, (Calcutta, 1976).
- Vivekananda, Swami, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, (Calcutta, 1989).
- Washbrook, David, 'The Development of Caste Organisation in South India, 1880-1925', in C.J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change*, (Delhi, 1975).
- Wise, James, *Notes on the Races, Castes and Tribes of Eastern Bengal*, (London, 1883).
- Zelliot, Eleanor, 'Learning the Use of Political Means: The Mahars of Maharashtra', in Rajni Kothari, (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics*, (New Delhi, 1973).

## II. UNPUBLISHED THESES :

- Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar, 'Social Mobility in Bengal in the Late Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries', (Ph.D. Thesis, Calcutta University, 1985).
- Basu, Swaraj, 'Caste Mobility in Northern Bengal: A Study of the Rajbansi Movement in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, 1891-1921', (M.Phil. Thesis, Calcutta University, 1986).

Khan, Md. Enamul Huq, 'A.K. Fazlul Huq and Muslim League in Bengal, 1906-1947', (Ph.D. Thesis, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1982).

Usuda, Masayuki, 'Aswini Kumar Datta's Role in Political, Social and Cultural Life of Bengal', (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Calcutta University, 1977).

## INDEX

- Abdus Samad, 173  
 aboriginals, 57  
*acharas*, 4  
 Adam, William, 98  
 Addhya, Advaita, 107  
*adhiaars*, 108, 178, 184  
 Africa, 43  
 Agradanis, 5  
 agricultural races, 27  
 Aguri, 102, 112, 116-8, 120  
*ajalchal*, 98, 101, 111, 142, 182  
 All Bengal Depressed Classes Conference, 167  
 All Bengal Depressed Classes Federation, 167  
 All Bengal Namasudra Association, 169  
 All India Depressed Classes Association, 164, 166  
 All India Depressed Classes Leaders' Conference, 166  
 All India Hindu Mahasabha, 166  
 All India Scheduled Castes Federation, 183  
 All Parties' Bengalee Hindu Conference, 172  
 Ambedkar, B.R., 166, 169, 183  
*Amritabazar Patrika*, 183, 205  
*Anandabazar Patrika*, 161-2  
 Andrews, C.F., 156  
 Anglo Indians, 64, 68-9  
 Aniruddhabhatta, 9  
*Antyaja*, 7, 98, 111, 142, 162, 182  
 Arnold, David, 13  
 Aryan civilization, 8  
 Aryanisation, 8  
 Aryans, 35  
*Asatasudra*, 6  
 Asiatic Society, 27, 40  
 Assam, 54, 63, 171  
*Astabingsatitattva*, 9  
 Aswini Tanti, 101  
*Atma Sakti*, 161  
 Australian Baptist Mission, 102  
 Avedananda, Swami, 158  
 backward castes, 155  
 backward classes, 56, 56-7, 65, 68  
 backward communities, 24  
 Bagdies, 10, 113  
 Baidyas, 6, 54, 99, 100-02, 109, 117-9, 142  
 Bakarganj, 33, 56, 69, 98, 113  
 Bal, Sarat Chandra, 180  
*Balahadis*, 97  
 Ballala Sena, 9  
 Banerjee, Surendranath, 41, 124, 159  
 Banerjee, Jitendralal, 173-4, 176  
 Banerjee, Kesab Chandra, 176  
 Banerjee, Pramathanath, 173  
 Banga, Praja Samiti, 179  
*Bangavasi*, 161  
 Bangiya Brahman Samaj, 174  
 Bangiya Janasangha, 164  
 Bangiya Karmakar Sammilani, 149  
 Bangiya Subarnabanik Sammilani, 121, 146  
 Bangsaja, 5  
*banians*, 106-7  
 Banias, 118  
 Bankura, 112  
 Baptist Zenana Mission, 65  
 Barendra, 5  
*bargadars*, 162  
 Barma, Rai Saheb Panchanan, 167, 174, 178  
 Barman, Shyama Prasad, 180  
 Barman, Upendranath, 152, 178, 180  
 Barmans, 9  
 Baruis, 6, 101-2, 110, 120, 145, 148  
 Barujibis, 128  
 Basanti Devi, 168-9  
 Basu, N.K., 174  
 Basu, Narendra Kumar, 167, 177

- Bayley, H.V., 23  
 Bengal Depressed Classes Association, 165, 169, 170  
 Bengal Depressed Classes Mission, 59  
 Bengal Hindu Samaj Sammilani, 122  
 Bengal Namasudra Association, 167, 170  
 Bengal People's Association, 164  
 Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919, 59  
 Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, 159  
 Bengal Provincial Hindu Conference, 157  
 Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha, 158  
 Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, 180, 184  
 Bengal Provincial Scheduled Castes Federation, 172  
 Bengal Social Service League, 157  
*Bengalee*, 101-2, 159  
 Besant, Annie, 160  
*bhakti* movement, 9, 96  
 Bhatias, 148  
 Bhats, 5  
 Bhattacharya, Digindranarayan, 126, 159, 162  
 Bhavandevabhatta, 9  
 Bhumalis, 7, 154  
 Bihar, 31, 61, 72, 171  
 Birbhum, 112, 170, 179  
 Bishop of Madras, 97  
 Biswas, Rasiklal, 166, 172-3, 179, 181  
 Bloch, Jules, 42  
 Blunt, 23  
 Bogra, 79  
 Bombay, 61  
 Bose, S.M., 173  
 Bose, Subhash, 183  
 Brahmans, 5-10, 24, 27, 29, 54, 71, 98, 101, 109, 112, 114, 117-9, 122, 126, 142, 158, 160  
 Brahmo Samaj, 122  
 Bratya Kshatriya Samiti, 102  
 Bratya Kshatriyas, 117  
 British Association for the Advancement of Science, 38  
 Buchanan, Francis, 22  
 Buddhism, 8, 78  
 Buddhists, 68  
 Burdwan, 106-7, 112, 126  
 Burdwan Raj, 105  
 Butler, 53  
 Calcutta, 56, 59, 72  
 Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act of 1939, 81  
 Calcutta Subarnabanik Samaj, 146-7  
 Calcutta University, 57, 59, 62, 64, 68  
 Carmichael, Lord, 148  
 Carrol, Lucy, 144  
 caste associations, 3  
 Caste Hindus, 41, 52-3, 79, 97, 126, 129, 162, 167, 181  
 caste ideology, 2  
 caste journals, 113  
 caste movements, 96, 200  
 caste organisations, 113  
 caste policy, 24  
 Census operations, 32, 37, 40  
 Census reports, 28, 38  
 Central Provinces, 61  
 Chaitanya *see* Sri Chaitanya  
 Chakraborty, Sudhir, 13  
 Chamars, 151  
 Chandals, 7, 42, 99, 100-1  
 Chandras, 9  
 Chandravarkar, Narayan, 125  
 Chasadhobas, 101, 107, 116  
 Chasi Kaibartias, 99, 101, 106, 109, 110, 113, 116, 127  
 Chatterjee, B.C., 172, 174  
 Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, 33, 123  
 Chatterjee, Ramananda, 168  
 Chaudhurani, Sarala Devi, 168  
 Chaudhuri, Mahiram, 99  
 Child-marriage, 119  
 Chittagong, 56, 79, 179  
 Christian missionaries, 22, 54, 59, 97, 102, 157  
 Christianity, 22, 97-8, 157  
 Christians, 69, 181  
 Chukanidars, 108  
 Chunder, Nirmal Chandra, 168

- Church Missionary Society, 66  
 Civil Disobedience Movement, 152,  
     162-3, 165-6, 170  
 civil servants, 22  
 Cohn, Bernard, 36, 53  
 Colebrook, 10, 142  
 Comilla, 56  
 commercial races, 27  
 Communal Award, 167-8, 179  
 Communal Decision, 75-7, 166  
 communal Politics, 205  
 communal representations, 64, 149,  
     150, 162  
 communalism, 167  
 Communists, 180  
 Constituent Assembly, 183  
 Constitutional reforms, 70  
 Cooch Behar, 178  
 Criminal tribes, 57  
 Cronin, Richard, 54  
 Croke, 39  
  
 Dacca, 56, 112, 145, 158, 161  
 Dacca College, 56  
 Dacca College of Engineering, 56  
 Dadabhoy, M.B., 57  
 Dakshinatyā Vaidiks, 5  
 Dalton, E.T., 23  
 Dampier, 26  
 Das, Baroda Charan, 112-3  
 Das, Bhishmadev, 64, 164, 177  
 Das, C.R., 161  
 Das, Mohini Mohan, 79, 151, 161  
 Das, Nitya Charan, 112-3  
 Das Gupta, Satish Chandra, 173  
 Datta, Aswini Kumar, 33, 159  
 Datta, Sagarlal, 107  
 Depressed classes, 14, 40-4, 52-3,  
     57-60, 62-7, 70, 73-6, 81, 144,  
     149-51, 154, 162, 164, 167-9, 173,  
     177, 182, 202-3, 205  
 Depressed Classes Association of  
     Bengal, 76  
 Depressed Classes Mission, 157  
 Depressed Classes Mission Society in  
     India, 156  
 Depressed Classes Status Bill, 71-2,
- 125  
 Dhobas, 7, 63, 110, 151  
 Dinajpur, 113  
 Doms, 42  
 Dosadhs, 63  
 Dravida, 5  
 Dumont, Louis, 104  
 Dutt, R P, 124  
 East Bengal and Sylhet Vaisya Sabha  
     Sammilani, 145  
 East India Company, 24, 106, 108  
 East Indies, 43  
 Eastern Bengal, 54, 63, 148, 152, 154,  
     180, 205  
 Elgin, Lord, 29  
 Ethnological studies, 32  
  
 Faridpur, 56, 65, 69, 98, 102, 106, 113,  
     158, 170  
 Fazlul Haq, A.K., 80, 179, 181-2  
 Franchise Committee Report, 62, 77  
 Prayer, J., 27  
 Fuller, Sir Bampfylde, 148  
  
 Gair, E.A., 39, 40  
 Gandhabanik Mahasammilani, 147  
 Gandhabaniks, 6, 101-2, 106, 110, 120,  
     146-8, 154  
 Gandhi, M.K., 71, 75-6, 158, 160,  
     162-3, 168-73, 184  
*Gauriya Vaishnava Sampradaya*, 97  
 Ghosh, Bepin Behari, 172  
 Ghosh, Charu Chandra, 71, 125  
 Goalas, 101, 110, 116, 118, 120  
 Gop, 6, 110  
 Gordon, Leonard, 159  
 Gough, Kathleen, 13, 203  
 Government of India Act of 1919, 61,  
     150  
 Government of India Act of 1935, 76  
 Grahbipras, 5  
 Griffin, Lepel, 29  
 Gujarat, 171  
  
 Halder, Ishan Chandra, 112  
 Halder, Rajendranath, 113  
 Hamilton, Buchanan, 99

- Hare, Sir Lancelot, 54, 148  
*Harijan*, 171  
 Harijans, 170, 172  
 Hazra, Raghuram, 112  
 higher castes, 3, 14, 24, 29, 33, 35, 36,  
     52, 54, 84, 96-8, 100, 119, 142,  
     156, 159, 204  
 Hindu community, 42, 53, 78, 80, 158,  
     168-9, 182, 202  
 Hindu Jatiya Siksha Sabha, 157  
 Hindu Mahasabha, 152, 159, 175, 183  
 Hindu Mission, 122, 158, 173  
 Hindu Sabha, 122, 157-8, 174-5, 181  
 Hindu Society, 2, 4, 10, 11, 23, 35, 39,  
     41-2, 52-3, 57, 71-2, 75, 100, 101,  
     124-5, 127, 143, 156, 159  
 Hinduism, 22, 125, 160  
 Hindus, 3, 7, 11-2, 14, 24, 36, 41,  
     43-4, 53-4, 68-9, 72-3, 76, 95-6,  
     98, 122, 130, 143, 150-1, 156,  
     158-9, 166, 168, 171, 181-2, 201-2  
 Hindus Status Bill, 71  
 Hogg, G.P., 71  
 Home Rule Movement, 154  
 Hooghly, 106, 113  
 Hopkyns, W.S., 66-8  
 Howrah, 33, 79, 107, 112-3  
 Hunter, W.W., 23, 25-6, 31  
 Huq, Syed Emdadul, 65  
 Hutton, 23  
 Hyderabad, 12  
  
 Inden, Ronald, 7  
 Indian Association, 41, 80, 174  
 Indian Franchise Committee, 73  
 Indian National Congress (Congress  
     Party), 159, 162, 183-4  
 Indian Statutory Commission, 125, 165  
 Ingram, M.S., 66  
 Irschik, Eugene, 83  
 Islam, 98, 157  
  
 Jackson, Stanley, 148  
 Jainism, 8  
*jalacharaniya*, 6, 142  
 Jalia Kaibartas, 101, 110, 113, 116  
 Jalias, 62  
  
 Jalpaiguri, 79, 108, 113, 151, 161  
 Jat Pat Todak Mandal, 122  
*Jat Vaishnavas*, 97  
*jati-dharma*, 4  
 Jeffrey, Robin, 13  
 Jenkins, W.A., 81  
 Jessore, 113, 170  
 Jessore and Nadia Sutradhar Samaj,  
     146  
 Jimutbahana, 9  
 Jogi Hitasadhani Sabha, 117  
 Jogi Sammilani, 148  
 Jogis, 6, 58-9, 62, 78, 101-2, 107, 114,  
     117, 120, 128, 148, 154, 174-5  
*Jogisakha*, 154  
*Jotdars*, 108, 154, 178, 184  
 Justice Party of Madras, 149  
  
 Kaibartas, 5, 6, 62, 106, 118  
 Kalinga, 9  
 Kalus, 62, 78, 116  
 Kalwars, 174  
 Kamars, 101-2  
 Kansabaniks, 6  
 Kapalis, 62, 149  
 Karmakars, 6, 120, 149  
 Kamataka, 171  
 Kamatic, 9  
*Kartabhajas*, 97  
 Karve, Irawati, 5  
 Kastha Srotriya, 5  
 Kasimbazar, 107  
 Kayasthas, 6, 12, 31, 54, 98, 100-2,  
     109-10, 116-9, 142  
 Kerr, James, 29, 61  
 Khadi Pratisthan, 173  
 Khandait, 62  
 Khilafat movement, 54, 152  
 Khulna, 113, 170  
 Kitts, Eustace, 30  
 Kochs, 101, 117  
 Krishak Praja Party, 179-81, 205  
 Kshtriya Chhatra Samiti, 145  
 Kshtriya Regiment, 149  
 Kshtriya Samiti, 117, 144-5, 148  
 Kshtriyas, 99, 114, 116, 152  
 Kuchler, 55



- Kulin*, 5  
*Kulinism*, 9  
*Kuloji legends*, 5  
 Kumbhakars, 6  
 Kurmis, 62  
  
 Laha, Prankrishna, 107  
 Lall, Peary, 31  
 Leonard, Karen, 12  
 Local Self Government Act in 1885, 112  
 London Missionary College, 102  
 Lothian, *Lord*, 73  
 Lothian Committee, 174  
 lower castes, 2, 3, 7, 12-4, 40, 52-4, 60, 84, 96-7, 110-1, 113, 119, 129, 144, 155, 159, 184  
 Lyall, Alfred, 33, 35  
 Lynch, Owen, 11  
 Lytton, *Lord*, 148  
  
 Madhunapits, 6, 101, 114  
 Madhyamsreni, 5  
 Madras, 42, 71, 83, 171  
 Madras Temple Entry Bill, 170  
 Mahajan Samiti, 152  
 Maharashtra, 171, 183  
*Mahisya Samaj*, 148, 155  
 Mahisya Samiti, 144  
 Mahisyas, 6, 56, 62, 68, 73-4, 100-1, 113-4, 116, 120, 127, 150-1, 154, 161, 163, 175, 203-5  
 Malakar, 6  
 Malda, 79, 113, 126  
 Mandal, Birat Chandra, 165, 180  
 Mandal, Jogendranath, 172, 180, 183  
 Mandal, Manindranath, 164  
 Mandali Samitis, 144-5  
*Mangalkavayas*, 3, 10  
 Manor, James, 13  
 Marwaris, 148  
*Matua*, 99  
 Maulavi Syed Jalaluddin Hashemy, 176  
 Maulavi Tamizuddin Khan, 177  
 Mayras, 101-2, 107, 117-8, 120  
 Mazumdar, Ambika Charan, 159  
 Mazumdar, Haridas, 173  
  
 Mead, C.S., 102  
 Midnapur, 5, 106-7, 112-4, 170, 205  
 Minto, *Lord*, 54  
 Mitra, Rajnarayan, 99  
 Mitra, Sarada Charan, 157  
 Mitter, P.C., 67-8, 70, 125  
 Modaks, 6, 101  
*Modern Review*, 156  
 Mondal, Benod Behari, 112  
 Mondal, Girish Chandra, 112  
 Mondal, Mukunda Lal, 112  
 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, 149  
 Moonje, B.S., 166  
 Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, 60, 149  
 Muchis, 113  
 Mukhapadhaya, Bhudeb, 123  
 Mukherjee, Ram Krishna, 119  
 Mukherjee, S.N., 143, 204,  
 Mukherjee, Shyamaprasad, 168  
 Mukherjee, *Lt. Col.* U.N., 157  
 Muller, Max, 35  
 Mullick, Devendralal, 107  
 Mullick, Jadulal, 107  
 Mullick, Mukunda Behari, 74, 80, 165-7, 173, 176, 179-82  
 Mullick, Nayan Chand, 107  
 Mullick, Nemai Charan, 107  
 Mullick, Rajendra, 121  
 Murshidabad, 79, 113, 126  
 Muslim League, 41, 164, 179-81, 183  
 Muslim separatism, 3, 143, 182  
 Muslims, 1, 14-5, 24, 43, 52, 56, 58, 63-6, 68-9, 81-2, 97, 101, 144, 149, 152, 158, 162, 180-2, 202  
 Mymensingh, 126, 179  
 Mymensingh Association, 124  
  
*Nabasakh*, 6, 111, 142  
 Nadia, 79, 106, 113, 179  
 Nag, Suklal, 174  
 Namasudras, 15, 42, 56, 59, 62, 65, 68, 73, 80, 99, 100-2, 107-8, 110, 113-4, 117-8, 127-8, 148-52, 155, 161, 177, 180, 203-4  
 Nandi, Krishnakanta, 107  
 Nandi, Monindra, 112, 153

- Nandi, Srish Chandra, 79, 151, 181  
 Napits, 6, 101-2, 110, 118, 128  
 Naskar, Hem Chandra, 79, 151, 161, 168, 181, 183  
 Naths (Jogis), 174  
 nationalism, 203, 205  
 nationalist movement 1, 2, 3, 15, 53-4  
 nationalist politics, 206  
 nationalist, 41, 54, 60, 129, 153, 156, 159, 168  
*Navyasmriti* literature, 9  
*Nayak*, 125, 150  
 Newson Trust, 59  
 Noakhali, 79  
 Non-Cooperation Movement, 152-3, 160-1  
 North America, 43  
 Northcote, 25  
  
 O'Malley, 23, 58, 62, 121  
 Omvedt, Gail, 13  
 Orakandi, 102  
 Orientalists, 22, 24, 52  
 Orissa, 5, 72, 116  
  
 Pabna, 79, 113, 170  
 Padmaraj, 101  
 Pal, Naran, 112  
 Pal, Radha Charan, 160  
 Pal Chowdhuri, Ranjit, 79, 151  
 Palas, 9  
 Paschatya Vaidiks, 5  
*patita*, 4  
 Paundra Kshatriya, 101, 148, 155, 163-4  
 peasantry, 1, 106, 108, 145, 179, 180, 183-4, 205  
 Peel, *Lord*, 29  
 Permanent Settlement, 105-6  
 Phulnapits, 101, 114  
 Plowden, 32  
 Poddar, Ananda Mohan, 173  
 Pods, 7, 101-2, 107, 113, 117, 148-9, 161, 174  
 Poona Agreement, 75-80  
 Poona Pact, 172-3, 175-6  
 Praja Samitis, 179  
  
*prayaschitta*, 4, 10  
 Provincial Civil Service, 64  
 Public Service Commission, 81  
 Punjab, 171  
*Puranas*, 4, 9  
 Purbabanga Vaisya Samiti, 145  
  
 Queen's Proclamation, 24  
  
 Raghunandana, 9  
 Rai, Gopi Krishna, 112  
 Raikat family, 108  
 Raikat, Jagadindradev, 152  
 Raikat, Prasanna Deb, 79, 80, 151, 180-1  
 Raja Rajballav, 99  
 Rajah, M.C., 166  
 Rajbansis, 56, 58, 62, 68, 73-4, 80, 99-101, 107-8, 113-4, 117, 120, 127, 144, 148-9, 151-2, 155, 161, 163, 174, 177, 180, 203-5  
 Rajputana, 171  
 Rajputs, 29  
 Rajshahi, 56, 79, 113, 170  
 Rajshahi College, 56  
 Rajus, 174  
 Ramakrishna *see* Sri Ramakrishna  
 Ramkrishna Mission, 123  
 Ranga Iyer, C.S., 70-2  
 Rangpur, 56, 113, 117, 145, 153  
 Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti, 127, 174  
 Rani Rashmoni, 99  
 Rarhris, 5  
 Raut, Hosseini, 79, 151  
 Ray, Amulyadhan, 170, 173, 176-7, 180  
 Ray, Nagendra Narayan, 162  
 Ray, Niharranjan, 7  
 Ray, Prafulla Chandra, 156, 158, 168  
 Ray, R.C., 169  
 Ray, Rajnarayan, 99  
 Ray, Santisekhareswar, 176  
 Ray, Sitanath, 122, 153  
 reform movements, 2  
 religion, 43  
 Revolt of 1857, 23-4, 29, 30  
 Risley, H.H., 23, 33-5, 37-9, 54, 201

- Round Table Conference, 73-4, 165  
 Roulatt Satyagraha, 153  
 Roy, Brojendra Kishor, 160  
 Roy, Jogendra Narain, 112  
 Roy, Ram Chandra, 106  
 Roy, Satkaripati, 170  
 Roy Bahadur, Upendra Lal, 151  
 Roy Chowdhury, Satish Chandra, 174  
 Rudolph, Lloyd, 13, 204  
 Rudolph, Susanne, 13, 204  
 Rural Primary Education Bill, 67  
  
 Sadgop Sabha, 146, 164  
 Sadgops, 6, 101, 105-6, 110, 112, 114, 116-8, 145  
 Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 156  
 Saha, Krishna Chandra, 112  
 Saha, Lakhi Narayan, 112  
 Saha Samiti, 152  
*Sahajiyas*, 97  
 Sahas, 6, 101, 106, 110, 112, 116, 118, 120; 145, 149, 152  
*Sahebghanis*, 97  
 Sakadwipis, 5  
*Sankara jatis*, 9  
*Sanjibani*, 161  
 Sankhabanikas, 6  
 Sanskritization, 96, 114, 120, 201  
 Santra, Umesh Chandra, 113  
 Sanyal, Hitesranjan, 111  
 Saraswats, 5  
 Sarbadhikari, Debaprasad, 167  
 Sarkar, Nalini Ranjan, 168, 181  
 Sarkar, Rebati Mohan, 162, 176  
 Sasanka of Gauda, 8  
 Sasmal, Birendra Nath, 113, 154, 168  
 Satchasis, 101, 114, 116  
*Satsudra*, 6, 144  
 Satyananda, *Swami*, 158, 173  
 Saundik Kshatriyas, 116  
 Scheduled Castes, 14-5, 43, 52, 76, 78-81, 167-69, 172-6, 179-84, 202-5  
 Scal, Motilal, 107  
 Sen, Aukshay Kumar, 173  
 Sen, Gouri, 107  
 Sen, Mathura Mohan, 107  
 Sen, Satyendranath, 172  
 Sen, Srikanta, 124  
 Sengupta, Nareesh Chandra, 173, 176  
 Sengupta, Nellie, 168  
 Senas, 9  
 Separate electorate, 63, 72, 166  
 Seth, Harihar, 127  
 sharecroppers (*bargadar*), 108  
 Sharp, Henry, 62  
 Shastri, Haraprasad, 40  
 Shastri, Sibnath, 124, 157  
 Shaw, Upendranath, 113  
 Sheering, M.A., 23, 30  
 Sikdar, Rasik Chandra, 112  
 Siliguri, 80  
 Simon Commission, 66, 72, 74, 77, 174  
 Simpson, 27  
 Sind, 171  
 Singh, Sobha, 10  
 Singh Roy, B.P., 70-1, 125, 181  
 Sinha, Bhupendra Naryan, 174  
 Sinha, Lord S.P., 157  
 Sircar, Dr. Nilratan, 54, 60  
*Smriti* system, 8  
*Smritikaras*, 9  
 social reformers, 2  
 Socialists, 180  
 Society for the Improvement of the Backward Classes, 59, 65, 67, 157  
 Sri Chaitanya, 9, 97  
 Sri Ramakrishna, 99, 123  
 Srinivas, 104  
 Srirampur Baptist Mission, 98  
 Subarnabanik Hitasadhani Sabha, 121  
 Subarnabanik Mahila Sammilani, 147  
*Subarnabanik Samachar*, 153, 155  
 Subarnabanik Samiti, 146  
 Subarnabanik Sammilani, 164  
 Subarnabanik Yubak Samiti, 146  
 Subarnabaniks, 6, 101-2, 106-7, 112, 117, 120-1, 146, 149, 153, 203  
 Subbarayan, Dr., 170  
 Suddha Srotriya, 5  
*Suddhi* movement, 158  
 Sudras, 5, 6, 72, 116, 118, 126, 159  
 Suhrawardy, H.S., 182

- Sukhis, 174  
 Sundis, 62, 78, 110, 116, 118, 175  
 Sussex Trust, 59  
 Sutradhars, 78, 174-5  
*Swadeshi*, 152, 154  
 Swajati Hitasadhani Samiti, 145  
 Swarajists, 150, 161  
 Swarajya Party, 161  
 Sylhet, 145  
  
 Tagore, Rabindranath, 124, 168, 172, 179  
*talukdars*, 112  
 Tambulbaniks, 6, 101-2, 106  
 Tantis, 101  
 Tantiboy, 6  
 Telis, 78, 116, 118  
 Thakur, Pramatha Ranjan, 180  
*Tili Samaj Patrika*, 153  
 Tilijati Hitaishi Sabha, 127, 147  
 Tilijati Sammilani, 127, 147  
*Tilir Gaurab*, 151, 153, 155  
 Tilis, 6, 99, 101, 106-7, 110, 112, 114, 118, 120, 127-8, 146, 149, 151  
 Tippera, 79, 179  
 Topinard, Paul, 33  
 Trevelyan, C.E., 108  
 tribal castes, 42  
 tribal cultures, 8  
 tribal religions, 78  
 tribes, 27, 57  
 24-Parganas, 59, 106, 113, 148, 161  
  
*Uchchajati*, 6  
 Ugra kshatriya, 116  
 Union Boards, 113  
 United Provinces, 61, 66, 72, 171  
 untouchability, 56, 75, 81, 126, 157, 162, 168, 170, 172, 205  
 Untouchability Abolition Bill, 70, 125, 170  
 untouchables, 7, 41, 52, 57, 61-2, 67, 71, 97, 169  
 upper castes, 96, 110, 149, 155  
 uttamasankara, 6  
  
 Vaishnava, 99  
 Vaisya Barujibi Sabha, 148  
 Vaisya Sahas, 145  
 Vaisyas, 101, 114, 116  
*Varna-Sankara jatis*, 5  
 Varna system, 8  
*Varnas* 5, 6  
 Vedas, 4  
 Vivekananda, *Swami*, 123  
*Vyavahara*, 4  
  
 Washbrook, 12  
 Willingdon, *Lord* 83  
 Wise, James, 23, 32  
 Wood, Charles, 29  
 working classes, 205  
  
 Yadavs, 116, 120  
 Youngmens' Literary Society, 122  
*Zamindars*, 7, 106-8, 111-2, 179

72, 171  
126, 157,  
5  
ill, 70, 125,  
61-2, 67,  
155

122  
79



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 02845 9611



Original from  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



